

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER I

Historical Sketches of North Africa, the Principal Country of the Donatists

For a number of centuries this country has been called the Barbary States, or simply Barbary, a term probably derived from the Barbary, who were long the ruling people of the country, and whose descendants are still numerous found among the fastnesses of the Atlas mountains. Under the Romans, at first this was one province; in the time of the Donatists it was divided into six; its divisions now are the empire of Morocco; Algeria, belonging to France for more than a third of a century; Tunis, under a Bey, who claims to be an independent sovereign; Tripoli, and the Desert of Barca. The last two belong to the Ottoman empire. In the time of the Donatists, the provinces most distinguished for this people were the Proconsular, in which were Carthage, Numidia, and the two Mauritinas. They cover a long and narrow strip of land extending about two thousand miles from the borders of Egypt on the east, to the Atlantic ocean on the west. Its average width is probably less than three hundred miles. It has the Mediterranean sea on the north, and the Sandy Desert on the South. Although this territory is situated in the temperate zone, mostly between the thirtieth and the thirty-seventh degrees of north latitude, the heat is often rendered exceedingly oppressive, during the summer months, by the proximity to the Great Desert, whose winds have a withering effect on the vegetables and animals of the country. The Atlas mountains extend great distances, running mostly parallel to the Mediterranean coast, and have several peaks and spurs, whose relations to the main chain are broken. The climate, soil and productions are exceedingly various. Some delightful spots are found among the mountains, whose coolness and verdure are a perpetual source of enjoyment. But the general aspect of the country is sad, bearing unmistakable marks of ruin and decay.

Africa Felix, embracing an extensive district of North Africa, is described by old Roman writers as the granary of Italy, and the jewel of the empire; but it now seems, when seen under a July and August sun, but little better than a desert. Indeed, the desert is gradually advancing towards the sea, dispersing the population and producing a widespread solitude. Populous cities and flourishing fields that once greeted the traveler are now hard to find.

Remarks on the Original Inhabitants of the Country Under Consideration

This region, says Mr. Perry, in his history of Tunis and Carthage, was early settled by a primitive race, of whose name and character we have but feeble traces. Its history, he says, begins only with the arrival of the Phoenician colonists, ten or twelve centuries before the Christian era. From that time great and marvelous changes began to take place. The natives were absorbed by the more powerful colonists, and great cities and states were founded, the most important of which were Carthage and Utica. The former of these cities brought under its sway all its rivals upon the continent of Africa, including Cyrenaica, founded by the sturdy Greeks, who were finally overcome by intrigue rather than bravery. Carthage, launching her forces upon the Mediterranean for the conquest of Sardinia and Sicily, was met in the latter island by the soldiers of Rome, which was then just

emerging from the period of infancy. We are now on the eve, or the commencement, of the long and bloody contests between Carthage and Rome.

The Three Punic Wars

These wars, in which the generals, Hannibal on the side of the Carthaginians, and Scipio, surnamed Africanus, on that of the Romans, were conspicuous, lasted nearly one hundred and twenty years, ending about a century and a half before the birth of Christ, with the ruin of Carthage and the reduction of her people and territory under the Roman rule. Under Rome, Carthage was rebuilt, and probably attained greater splendor and magnificence than when it was the capital of a mighty empire. As a Phoenician city, Carthage was the abode of princely merchants, intriguing politicians, and mighty warriors. As a Roman city, it was the resort and abode of learned men who cultivated the fine arts, and made these African shores as distinguished for civilization and refinement, as they had been, at an earlier period, for military glory and commercial enterprise. But still it was notorious for the most horrible acts of idol worship, in the midst of which Christianity was introduced at an early period, at which time we are not informed, as we are of the persecutions of Christians by the heathen rulers; especially by Tertullian in his able defense of the Christian cause. **It was in this country that Felicita and Perpetua, two noble females, suffered martyrdom while it was under the heathen rulers. But in process of time Christianity spread over the whole land.** In this country, says Perry, where today the Koran reigns, arose innumerable churches, from Egypt to Tangiers, from the desert to the coast.

The Rise of the Donatists

With the exception of the Novatians, who were in the field as dissenters from the main body of professed Christians, about half a century earlier, the Donatists were the largest community of the sound evangelical class, in early times. The circumstances of their origin, and events connected with it, I will relate in the language of Mosheim, although some of his statements may not altogether agree with other statements less tinged with Catholic prejudices:

“Mensurius, bishop of the Catholic church of Carthage, in Africa, died in the year 311; and the greatest part of the clergy and people chose in his place the archdeacon Caecilian, who, without waiting for the assembly of the Numidian bishops, was consecrated by those of Africa alone.

“This hasty proceeding was the occasion of much trouble. The Numidian bishops, who had always been present at the consecration of the bishops of Carthage, were highly offended at their being excluded from this solemn ceremony, and assembling themselves at Carthage, called Caecilian before them, to give an account of his conduct. The flame thus kindled, was greatly augmented by certain Carthaginian presbyters who were competitors with Caecilian, particularly Bostrus and Celesius.

“Lucilla also, an opulent lady, who had been reprimanded by Caecilian for her superstitious practices, and had conceived against him a bitter enmity on that account, was active in exasperating the spirits of his adversaries, and distributed a large sum of money among the Numidians to encourage them in their opposition to the new bishop. In consequence of all this, Caecilian, refusing to submit to the judgment of the Numidians, was condemned in a council, assembled by Secundus, bishop of Tigisis, consisting of seventy prelates, who, with the consent of a

considerable part of the clergy and people, declared him unworthy of the episcopal dignity, and chose his deacon, Majorinus, for his successor. By this proceeding, the Carthaginian church was divided into two factions, and groaned under the contests of two rival bishops, Caecilian and Majorinus.

“The Numidians alleged two important reasons to justify their sentence against Caecilian; first, that Felix of Aptungus, the chief of the bishops who assisted at his consecration, was a traditor, that is, one of those who, during the persecution under Diocletian, had delivered the sacred writings and the pious books of the Christians to the magistrates to be burnt; and that having thus apostatized from the service of Christ, it was not possible that he could impart the Holy Ghost to the new bishop.

“A second reason for their sentence against Caecilian was drawn from the harshness and even cruelty that he had discovered in his conduct, while he was a deacon, towards the Christian confessors and martyrs, during the persecution above mentioned, whom he abandoned in the most merciless manner, to all the extremities of hunger and want, leaving them without food in their prisons, and hindering those who were willing to succor them, from bringing them relief. To these accusations they added the insolent contumacy of the new prelate, who refused to obey their summons, and to appear before them in council to justify his conduct.”

The Donatists having brought this controversy before Constantine the Great, that emperor, in the year 313, appointed Melchiades, bishop of Rome, to examine the matter, and he named three bishops of Gaul to assist him in the business. In this case, said the Donatists, the bishops shut themselves up, and in a hurry passed sentence against them, refusing to hear their complaints. Similar meetings by the order of Constantine were convened in a number of different places, all *ex parte*, in all of which the Donatists were condemned.

Instead of continuing the prolix and extended narratives of Mosheim on the subject under consideration, which are according to the version of the Catholics, with whom he appears to have been identified, I will give extracts from the descriptions of a secular author, who, as an outside observer, was not identified with either side. Previous, however, to introducing these extracts, I will relate this author's report of the amount of money the famous Lucilla is reputed to have paid the Numidian bishops, toward advancing her servant, so called, Majorinus, to the bishopric of Carthage. The details are given in the note. As Majorinus is said to have been Lucilla's reader or chaplain, this may account for the term servant being applied to him.

The Rise and Early History of the Donatists By Gibbon

Although in the following descriptions we have not only Catholic versions, but also those of a changeable secular writer; yet, as some of the sentences are very appropriate, I will not omit those of different mold.

“The complaints and mutual accusations which assailed the throne of Constantine, as soon as the death of Maxentius had submitted Africa to his victorious arms, were ill adapted to edify an imperfect proselyte. He learned with surprise that the provinces of that great country, from the confines of Cyrene to the columns of Hercules, were distracted with religious discord. The source of the vision was derived from a double election in the church of Carthage; the second, in rank and

opulence, of the ecclesiastical thrones of the west. Caecilian and Majorinus were the two rival primates of Africa; and the death of the latter soon made room for **DONATUS**, who, by his superior abilities and apparent virtues, was the firmest support of his party. "The advantage which Caecilian might claim from the priority of his ordination was destroyed by the illegal, or at least indecent, haste with which it had been performed, without expecting the arrival of the bishops of Numidia. The authority of these bishops, who, to the number of seventy, condemned Caecilian and consecrated Majorinus, is again weakened by the infamy of some of their personal characters, and by the female intrigues and bargains and tumultuous proceedings imputed to the Donatists in the council of the Numidians which condemned Caecilian."

The above reproachful terms were evidently copied by Gibbon from Catholic history, as were all his descriptions of the kind. In the following passages we have specimens of unusual candor for a secular author of Mr. Gibbon's class: "Both parties," says Gibbon, "accused each other of being traitors. The controversy," says he, "in which Constantine was concerned, improperly," as he has elsewhere suggested, "lasted three years." "As," says this writer, "the cause of the Donatists was examined with attention, perhaps it was determined with justice; but perhaps their complaints were not without foundation, that the credulity of the emperor was abused by the insidious acts of his favorite, Otius." This is a candid and sensible remark. "The rise of the Donatists, which scarcely deserves a place in history," says Gibbon, "was productive of a memorable schism, which afflicted all the provinces of Africa above three hundred years, and was extinguished only with Christianity itself." "The inflexible zeal of freedom and fanaticism," continues our author of a two-fold dialect, "animated the Donatists to refuse obedience to the usurpers whose election they disputed, and whose spiritual powers they denied." I will leave the above descriptions without comment at present. "Notwithstanding this irreconcilable aversion, the two parties, who were mixed and separated in all the cities of Africa, had the same language and manner; the same zeal and learning; the same faith and worship. Proscribed by the civil and ecclesiastical powers of the empire, the Donatists still maintained in some provinces, particularly in Numidia, their superior numbers, and four hundred bishops acknowledged the jurisdiction of their primate."

In the foregoing remarks, it is plain to be seen, this writer is partial and impartial by turns. While he had but little affection for the Donatists as a dissenting party of Christians, he had less for the Catholics as such, and as persecutors. His stigmas on the Donatists are merely repetitions of the language of their adversaries. What was said by Gibbon of the Donatists afflicting Africa, or, in other words, the Catholics, for above three hundred years, is in direct opposition, as to time, to all Catholic history on this subject, which allows them but about one hundred years. Gibbon's date is doubtless correct; and what he says of their being extinguished only with Christianity itself, has reference to the Mahometan conquest and invasion of the country, which they have held for about twelve centuries. Du Pin's *Monumenta* was Gibbon's authority in general. My account of this work is given in Chapter XIV. The foregoing statements of the reputed facts concerning the doings and affairs of the Donatists are for the most part from the writings of Optatus, the earliest writer against this people. They have been quoted by authors generally with apparently full confidence in their correctness; while Friar Baldwin, a semi-modern Catholic writer, whose comments on some of the positions of Optatus, and also of Augustine, will be candidly criticized in these narratives, quite often convicts them of historical errors. Of one subject which he named, he said he doubted whether Optatus, secluded in a corner of Numidia, ought to have said

anything whatever on the early affairs of the Donatists, of which he had no records, by his own account.

A brief account of the different kinds of treatment of the Donatists, first and last, by the then newly proclaimed emperor Constantine, will now be given.

This proclamation was made by the Roman army in 306. At this time the whole empire was full of the temples of idols, in whose worship the ruling powers and the great mass of the people were involved. As was stated by Gibbon, **the newly proclaimed emperor did not gain control of the whole empire till after the death of his rival, Maxentius, which event happened in 312.**

Constantine now having control of the whole empire, and having openly professed the Christian religion, proclaimed freedom of conscience to all parties who professed it. Such was the fair prospect for dissenters from the main body of professed Christians, in the commencement of the reign of the first Christian emperor. **But the new ruler, instead of pursuing a course so just and fair, in his attempts to reconcile the parties by meddling with their disputes, soon became a partisan himself, in opposition to the Donatists, and in his support of the dominant party,** by splendid patronage and coercive measures. "From this time," said Neander, "the whole matter took another turn; **laws of the state now appeared against the party of MAJORINUS; they were deprived of their churches, and the places where they assembled were confiscated.** They were treated as transgressors of the imperial laws. The forces by which it was sought to destroy them, as usually happens, only proved the means of giving them a new impulse, and pushed the spirit of enthusiasm already existing among them in the bud, into full development."

Majorinus, indeed, died in the year 215; but with him the schism, which had struck deeper root, by no means ceased. Besides, he had rather served to give an outward name to the party, than really constitute the head and soul of it. The latter had until now been Donatus, bishop of Casae Nigrae in Numidia, who stood in the same relation to Majorinus as, under similar circumstances, Novatus had done to Novatian at the beginning of the Novatian schism. But Donatus, the successor of Majorinus, was himself the head and soul of the sect.

"When now the Donatists, in addition to what they had done already, transmitted to the emperor, in the year 321, a petition, in which they declared that nothing would induce them to enter into church fellowship with that scoundrel, his bishop (meaning Caecilian); that they would rather suffer everything he might choose to inflict on them; Constantine became convinced, doubtless, still more than ever, by the tone of this document, of the dangerous consequences which must follow, if violent measures for the restoration of the peace of the church were pursued any farther.

"Experience led him to act according to the principles which, in obedience to the voice of reason and the spirit of Christianity, he ought to have pursued from the beginning. In a rescript addressed to the Vicar Verinus, in North Africa, Constantine granted the Donatists full liberty to act according to their own convictions, declaring that this was a matter which belonged to the judgment of God. To these principles Constantine remained firm to the end."

The persecutions above described continued about five years. Constantine died in 337, and for the last sixteen years of his reign the Donatists were not harassed by any persecuting laws. This was the first great temporal state ruler

who embraced the Christian cause, and his bad example in dealing with the Donatists has been followed, and very often much surpassed, by countless numbers of professedly Christian rulers in all succeeding ages. While such a statement is highly discreditable to Christianity itself, that is still more so which places the clergy, in most cases, at the bottom of persecution. Temporal rulers always have enough of their own various affairs to engross their attention without meddling with religious controversies, which they generally as little understand as did Constantine the reason of the Donatists for dissenting from the Catholic church, or the difficulty of forcing them to return to it.

A Great Change in the Odious Business of Persecution by the Aid of the Secular Powers

In the early age of Christianity the persecution of Christians, by pains and penalties, was by the worshipers of the false gods of the heathen. Different parties had their controversies, but they could have no aid from the secular powers against their opponents, had they desired it; but no sooner was the first emperor, who professed himself a Christian, seated on the throne, than there was an entire change in the business of persecution, so far as its subjects were concerned.

Formerly, it was the heathen persecuting the Christians; now, it was Christians persecuting their recusant brethren, who were worshipers of the same God. This bad example of the first Christian ruler, who was not naturally a persecutor, was doubtless through the influence of persecuting court bishops, of whom a countless number has existed in all nations, of every age.

Events in the Early Operations of the Donatists

As some of these events will be referred to in our subsequent narratives, at present I shall have respect only to Donatus himself. He was not only condemned at Rome, but retained there, for what reason, or how long, we are not informed. It is said he was condemned by the council, so called, on his confession that he had rebaptized and reordained fallen bishops; "lapsed," was then the term. This old story, which has gone the rounds of all church history, was not credited by Friar Baldwin, the Catholic historian before referred to.

Donatus At Rome

After the council at Rome, according to Fleury, the Donatists waited on the emperor and complained of not being heard in that meeting; that the few Catholic bishops shut themselves up, passed sentence against them in a hurry, and refused any examination of Felix, the ordainer of Caecilian. At length Donatus sought and obtained permission of Constantine to return to Carthage. Then, says the historian, Filumin, an officer of the emperor's household, suggested that, for the sake of peace, Caecilian should be retained at a place called Brixia, which was accordingly done. At the same time the emperor sent two bishops, named Eunomius and Olympius, into Africa in search of the true church among the contending parties, which being done, they were to remove the two rival bishops, and place another in the episcopal chair. To abridge a long account, the two bishops spent forty days in Carthage on their mission without deciding which was the prevailing party; but being true Catholics, in the end their report favored that side, and of course they aided Caecilian in his contest for the episcopal seat. The inexperience of Constantine appears in his appointing two bishops of the same party to decide which side was the strongest. Du Pin, in commenting on the plan of Filumin to keep Caecilian away from Carthage while the search of the above

named bishops was being made, says he was a partisan of Donatus. On this hypothesis he had a friend in Caesar's household. This plan for the absence of Caecilian, on the part of the prudent Filumen, indicates a decidedly unfavorable opinion of the man; and the fact that the two bishops above referred to, after forty days' search among the Catholics and the Donatists, could not decide which party prevailed, affords conclusive evidence of the multitude of the reformers in the populous city of Carthage, in the very beginning of their operations. Not only in Carthage, the seat of the controversy about ordaining Caecilian, did a numerous party arise, but the Catholics themselves say that from this ordination the whole of Catholic Africa was split into two parties, and in most of the churches a bishop was designated for each party. In all the accounts, the origin of the Donatists is wholly attributed to a disagreement in the choice of a new bishop at Carthage. That this was the occasion of the schism out of which the new party arose is very plain, but that the real cause of it may be traced to the opposition of the reformers to the old system of church building and management, and to a radical change in church discipline and purity, will fully appear in our subsequent narratives, especially in the last chapter.

NOTES

1. This is an *exparte* story, and very doubtful.
2. The Latin *traditor* and the English *traitor* have the same meaning; the Latin term above is well defined as then used. But in this whole history we shall find the Donatists very often apply the term to their opponents in a more extended sense. "Our traitors and persecutors" was with them a very common expression. *Traditores persecutoresque nostri* was their language.
3. The amount was four hundred foles. Every fole contained one hundred and twenty-five pieces of silver, and the whole sum may be computed at about two thousand four hundred pounds sterling. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Vol. 1, page 314. Note. Harper's Ed. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Vol. 1, pp. 436
4. *Nullo modo se communicationes, antistiti ipsius nebuloni*. Neander's *Church History*, Vol. 2, p.193.
5. *Ex hac ordinatione scissa est in duos parets universa Africa, constituti in plerisque ecclesias duo pro utraque parte episcopi*. Op. August, in *tomum nonum praefacio*.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 2

Optatus Against the Donatists--The Origin of This Work

This work is described by Friar Baldwin. Although he was a firm Catholic of the legal profession, yet he was an unusually candid historian, and well acquainted with the history, both of his own people and of the Donatists. In his annotations on Optatus, which will be noticed hereafter, he gives brief descriptions of the early

writings of both parties, according to which, Donatus himself wrote many works concerning his own sect, of which one Vitellius was a sharp defender, as was Parmenian, the successor of Donatus. In the meantime, says the Friar, the Catholics were almost dumb, as they certainly did not publish any works in their own defense; but at length Optatus, the Catholic bishop of Mileve, in Numidia, appeared against the Donatists in reply to the work of Parmenian against the Catholics. The production now to be examined was in Latin, in which language it still remains. By itself it is a small concern in the amount of matter; but with the notes and comments of various Catholic writers, it occupies about one-half of the folio volume which bears the name of the "Works of Optatus." But although small in size, yet as it is wholly devoted to matters of controversy between him and his opponent Parmenian, I have found more facts in it pertaining to the complaints of the ordinary transactions of the Donatists, and of their inroads on the Catholics, than in Augustine or any other opponent of this ancient community. But these complaints were similar to those which are always made concerning a new party which arises in an old and lukewarm church. This earliest writer against the Donatists was severe and mild by turns; but his concessions to his opponents were quite unusual, as will hereafter be seen. In the midst of his Catholic zeal he claimed a brotherhood with the Donatists, and never branded them with the odious name of heretics. Optatus, says Du Pin, begins his first book with words full of charity. He complained that the peace which Jesus Christ left to his church was disturbed by the schism and the actions of the Donatists, yet he gives them the name and the title of brethren. Though they renounce us, says he, though all the world knows that they hate us and detest us, though they would not have us call them brethren, yet we will follow the command of the prophet in saying, nevertheless ye are our brethren, although ye are not good and kind to us. We have one spiritual nativity, but are different in our ways; therefore let no one wonder that I call them brethren since they cannot be otherwise, whether they will or not. Now, said Optatus to Parmenian, so often as I have shown that we are the children of the same mother, which you cannot deny, yet you continue your scandals against us. Finally, with you and with us there is the same form of discipline, we read the same scriptures, we have the same faith, the same rule of faith, and the same sacraments. These complaints by Optatus, which are scattered in different places in this work, I shall notice under appropriate heads.

Against the Rebaptizing of the Donatists

As both the Catholics and the Donatists practiced immersion in baptism, there could be no dispute between them on the mode of baptism. Optatus was in union with the Donatists in maintaining the requirement of faith before baptism. The repetition of the rite was the principal matter of dispute between the parties, except that Optatus, with his party, held to the salutary influence of baptism. Baptism, said he, makes a man a Christian, and how can he be made a Christian the second time? Baptism in the name of the Trinity confers grace, which is destroyed by a second baptism. The apostle Paul hath said there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. If, said Optatus to Parmenian, you still contend for the liberty of giving another baptism, then give another faith; if another faith, then another Christ; if another Christ, then another God; but, said, he, you cannot deny the unity of God without falling into the pit of the heretic Marcion. We, said Optatus, instead of rebaptizing Donatists, after the example of the Master, receive them with all humility; far be it from us, that we should recall them for a second washing. There are three things in baptism, said Optatus to his opponent Parmenian, which you can neither increase, nor diminish, nor omit. The first is the Trinity, without which no baptism was valid. The second is the believer. The third

is the baptizer. But, says this author, they are not of equal weight. The first two he pronounced necessary; for the faith of the baptizer, he said there was only a quasi or sort of necessity. "Yes," says the Catholic bishop Albaspin, in his notes on Optatus, "the person baptized ought to believe, he ought to have faith, which is not required of the administrator of baptism." Because the Donatists required faith not only of the person baptized, but also of the baptizer, Optatus accused them of esteeming themselves more holy than the Catholics. Du Pin, in his closing remarks on this passage, said: Optatus endeavored to prove that the faith of him who receives baptism is necessary for the validity of the sacrament. This, he said, must be understood of adult persons only. Du Pin, in this case, spoke as a pedobaptist would have it, and in favor of his own practice, since there is nothing in the original to warrant the assertion.

On the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness of Rebaptizing

You, said Optatus to Parmenian, say it is lawful, while we say it is unlawful; and between your lawful and our unlawful, the minds of the people are wafted to and fro; none will believe you, and none will believe us, but they all regard us as a contentious kind of men. Trine immersion is supposed to have been referred to by Optatus when he said to the Donatists, we defend the union of baptism administered in the name of the Trinity. Not without reason, says an editor of Optatus, some may suspect those trine immersions are here referred to which were required in the 50th Canon of the Apostolic Constitutions, which reads thus: "If any bishop or presbyter do not perform three immersions in one baptism, which is given into the death of Christ, let him be deposed."

The Censures of Optatus of the Donatists

"Thou sittest and speakest evil of thy brother, and thou slanderest thy mother's son. Thou sawest the thief and didst run with him. Thou hast thy portion with adulterers." In justice to Optatus in the above censures, I will explain his meaning in the following terms: In Patristic writing, the term mother means the Catholic church; and she being accounted the spouse of Christ, all who left her for other lovers were termed adulterers. Running with a thief instead of stopping him was intended as a reproach on the Donatists, for what Optatus called their stealing the Catholic members.

"God says seek peace and pursue it; and in the gospel we read of peace on earth and good will to men; but with you there is no peace nor good will with us.

"Behold, says the Psalmist, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. But nothing of this, will you have with us, your brethren.

"Peter was informed by Christ that he who had been well washed once, had no need of being washed again; but you, in your rebaptizing our members, give them another washing."

This finding baptism in footwashing was often referred to by Optatus. In this case he was wise above what was written by his own confession, namely, in adding bene, well, to make it read well washed. This, with him, was Catholic baptism.

"God says, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm, yet how many of the anointed priests of God with us, have been spoiled of their priestly honors, with you.

“Christ knows his disciples by their loving each other; but you will not imitate the apostles, by whom even Peter, the betrayer of his Master, was beloved.”

The Penitentiary System Among the Catholics

As much will soon be said by Optatus from a Catholic standpoint on the supposed degradation of the bishops and other officers of the dominant church who went to the Donatists, at this point I will give a brief account of the ancient penitentiary system. Penance is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic church, and penitents, instead of being candidates for church membership, are church members, and sometimes officers, in disgrace. Such, in the time of Optatus, was the punishment of bad bishops with the Catholics, and with men of this class he associated all who united with the Donatists, hence the sympathy he professed for his former brethren of the episcopal order, and of the other classes of converts by the Donatists, among whom Optatus seemed to suppose the penitentiary system was in vogue; whereas nothing of it appears in their history in all that is said of their church polity by Augustine and others. They turned out of their churches at once those whom the Catholics placed under penance.

“The church,” said Optatus, “is divided into four classes, namely, bishops, presbyters, deacons, and the faithful, or the laity; not one of these classes, said this complaining writer to the Donatist bishop Parmenian, have you been willing to spare. God mourns over those sacrilegious acts of yours. You have found young men whom you have put under penance lest they should be ordained.” Those who were put under penance were disqualified from officiating in any office.

“You have found faithful old men whom you have made penitents; acknowledge you have perverted their souls. You have found deacons, presbyters and bishops, whom you have made laymen; acknowledge you have perverted their souls. You have sharpened your tongues into swords for the death of our clergy, not of their bodies, but of their honors; you have slaughtered, not their members, but their names. The men still live in their members, but of what avail are they, but to bear about the funereal badges of their slaughtered dignity? Oh, the unheard of impiety, that the priests of God should be thus slaughtered among your penitents. You have committed a living homicide. God says, touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm.”

The large accessions to the Donatists from the Catholic clergy are clearly indicated by the above complaints. All who continued in office in their new connection were of course rebaptized and reordained.

Optatus Complains of the Donatists for the Divisions They Caused Among the Catholics

“You can remember,” said he, to his antagonist Parmenian, “how, not long since, by your proselyting measures, the members of the mother church were scattered. For you could not seduce a whole household at once. But either the wife went away, leaving her husband behind her, or else both parents were seduced, and the children were unwilling to follow them; or, it may be, the sister wandered away, and the brother remained at home.” Such, said Optatus, are the divisions of the persons and the families of piety by your unlawful persuasions. The censorious bishop reproached his opponents who made such inroads among his people with entering dwellings with the familiar salutation, “Peace to this house, peace be with

you;" while, said he, like those of old, you cry, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace;" and this is because you esteem yourselves to be the only holy people. If you think you suffer persecution, say, said he, what do whole provinces of Catholics suffer from you?

The great success of the Donatists in gaining adherents to their cause from the Catholic ranks, may be inferred from the foregoing complaints of Optatus.

Free Remarks of Optatus on the Proselytizing Measures of the Donatists

For the most part he addressed them in the serious manner of the foregoing details, but occasionally his language was quite humorous and sarcastic. When the Donatists reoccupied their churches which had been used by the Catholics, they of course found some renovating measures needful, which the oversensitive bishop turned to a bad account against his own people, in the following terms: You, said he, have scraped the stones of the pavements, have whitewashed the walls of the churches, and have washed the baptismal baths and garments. Go on, said he, with your cleansing process, and wash the water itself if you can; why leave anything unwashed. Optatus continued his flings against his opponents by comparing them to skillful fowlers in the hawking system, in which captured birds catch the free, and dead birds kill the living ones. Such, said he to Parmenian, is your practice in rebaptizing and in penitence.

Optatus's List of the Countries Where Christianity Was Spread in His Time, about 368

As the Catholics claimed special relation to all Christendom, the object in this case seems to have been to show their superiority over the Donatists. I will give the list as I find it in Optatus, without any chronological order. Africa, Spain, Italy, Gaul, three Pannonias, Dacia, Misia, Thrace, Achaia, Macedonia, all Greece, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Pamphylia, Phrygia, Cilicia, three Syrias, two Armenias, all Egypt, Mesopotamia, and innumerable islands, so numerous that they can hardly be named. Britain is not named in this list, for which no reason is given, although Christianity was planted there at an early period; but it was some time after Optatus before Austin with his forty monks was sent there to convert the Saxons. In none of the above named countries, said Optatus to the Donatist, Parmenian, are your people found, except in a corner of Africa. O, ungrateful and foolish presumption, said he, that you should attempt to persuade men that you alone have the true Catholic faith. In opposition to the assertion of the Donatists being confined to a corner of Africa, Optatus at another time **decidedly implicated them in what was not then customary with the Catholics, of sending out missionaries not only to Spain and Gaul, but over the seas, to remote regions of other tongues.** By a change of language Optatus addressed his opponent in the following pacific terms: We, said he, pray for you willingly, while you may pray for us unwillingly; so you see, brother Parmenian, the holy bonds of brotherhood between you and us cannot be wholly broken asunder; let human suspicion cease; let the assurance of each party be silent; who may be the transgressor God alone can judge.

The Donatists Settled in Rome

According to Optatus, by the request of some of this people who were settled in Rome, a bishop was sent from their brethren in Africa, to form them into a church of their own order. Victor was the name of the bishop thus sent from Africa. None

of the circumstances of this transaction, nor the number of the church, are given. Victor, of course, was the first pastor. His successors, according to Optatus, were Claudian Lucian, Macrobius, Encolapius, and Boniface. The date of the organization of the church is not given, but if the pastors were but for short periods in office, it must have been soon after the rise of the Donatists in Africa. This is the only instance I have found of so many names of pastors, in succession, in any of the churches of the Donatists. At this time, according to Optatus, about 368, the Catholics had forty churches in Rome, but Friar Baldwin thinks they had a greater number. To belittle the Donatists in comparison with his own people, Optatus thus described their early efforts: "Victor, at Rome," said he, "was a son without a father, a tyro without a principal, a disciple without a master, a follower without a leader, an inhabitant without a house, a guest without a lodging place, a pastor without a flock, a bishop without a people." To these historical sketches from Optatus, I will add brief extracts from the comments of two able Catholic writers on his work. Some remarks on the Macarian war, by Optatus, will be given in the next chapter.

Observations of Optatus by Bishop Albaspin

This is a laborious work of a learned and unusually candid Catholic bishop, whose main object was to describe the errors and faults of the Donatists from his own standpoint. He begins with baptism. The fault on this subject was, that they washed again those who had been baptized; but, says the bishop concerning this matter, there are many things to be observed. "In the first place," said he, "the Donatists, according to their institution and doctrine, did not rebaptize the Catholics, for they tenaciously held with them to only one baptism, and that Christians were to be only once baptized. In the second place, the repetition of baptism was not the special and peculiar fault of this sect, neither did it originate with the Donatists, but it came from the divine Cyprian, who taught through all Africa, that heretics coming into the church must be rebaptized; and whatever he taught was held as a rule of faith." The account of Cyprian's council in support of his rebaptizing policy may be found in Chapter VIII. The fault of rebaptizing, says the bishop, was followed by that of reordaining. Of the abundance of errors and faults ascribed to the Donatists by bishop Albaspin, I will only refer to the following: They held that all Catholic churches of the east and west were infected and polluted by their connection with Caecilian and his successors. They held that the visible church of Jesus Christ does not, and ought not to, consist of any but the innocent and harmless, who are free from spots and falls. The Donatists made laymen of Catholic deacons, presbyters and bishops; and all who joined them of all clerical orders were immersed again in water.

Annotations on Optatus by Friar Baldwin

This is a work of about twenty folio pages; it is highly commended by bishop Albaspin, whose observations on Optatus have just been reviewed. Both of these authors concur in the opinion that Optatus had been much corrupted in former works, and Baldwin claimed to have taken much pains to ascertain the original text. In surveying this mass of historical facts, which abounds in the lore of ecclesiastical antiquities, which makes one wonder at the labor and researches of the author of the legal profession, I find but few statements except of a general character. This work will hereafter be more generally noticed, when extracts from it will be made. At present I will observe, in passing, that although Friar Baldwin was a decided Catholic, yet he criticized the positions of men of his own party with great freedom.

NOTES

1. Unus Deus, unus Christus, una fides, una tinctio.
2. Duas enim video necessarias et unam quasi necessariam. Op. Opta., Liber Quintus, p. 102.
3. Tu rebaptizando iterum lavas. Op. Opta., Liber Quartus, p. 89.
4. Se Op. Opta., Lib. Tertius, p. 79
5. Omnes sive episcopi, sive presbyteri, denuo aquis immergebantur. Albaspin in Optatus, p. 172.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 3

Persecutions of the Donatists

From the death of Constantine the Great to the reign of Julian was a period of about a quarter of a century, during which Constantine II., Constantius and Constans, sons of the founder of the dynasty, occupied the imperial throne. Of none of these reigns, so far as the Donatists were concerned, do I find so much information as of that of Constans, under whose administration of the empire occurred the Macarian war, accounts of which will occupy a considerable portion of this chapter. Although it is said that Constans at first did not seem disposed to engage in severe measures against the Donatists, to force them back into the church, yet under him, in the end, this people were most severely persecuted. After Constantine the Great, the Roman empire was divided into two parts, which were called the eastern and western, from their geographical positions. The western portion, in which North Africa was included, fell to Constans, who, says Neander, instead of forcible measures in the early part of his reign, simply employed those means which were then frequently resorted to on the part of the court for the purpose of making proselytes. In the year 340, the emperor directed his two commissioners, Ursacius and Leontius, to endeavor by the distribution of money under the name of alms to win over the Donatist churches; and as the said emperor at the same time issued an edict whereby he called upon the North African Christians to return back to the unity of the church which Christ loved, it was the less possible that the object of these measures should remain concealed from the Donatist bishops. On the failure of this covert scheme for gaining the Donatists, forcible measures were the next resort. The Donatists now were to be deprived of their churches, and they were actually fallen upon by armed troops while assembled in them for the worship of God. Hence followed the effusion of blood, and the martyrdoms of which the Donatists so often complained of their adversaries. Those who fell victims in these persecutions, says Neander, were honored by their party as martyrs, and the annual celebration of the days of their death furnished new means of enkindling the enthusiasm of the Donatist party. In the times under consideration Gratius had succeeded Caecilian as bishop of

Carthage. Both he and the emperor Constantius, says Robinson, persecuted the Donatists with great severity. At an early period this persecuted people entirely renounced the church and state policy, and, of course, "What has the emperor to do with the church?" was their reply to the offers of royal bounty. The evil spirit, before openly combated in the church, said they, was now a still more dangerous enemy, in its covert attacks, since it made a pretext of religion itself, and strove to insinuate itself into men's hearts by flattery.

The Macarian War Against the Donatists, in 347

This followed the unsuccessful experiments with the royal bounty, which was rejected by the Donatists. This is the only case among all the severe persecutions of this people of which we have any detailed accounts; and in this case all the reputed facts are from the pen of Optatus, who had no records, but related what he had heard; and when the Donatists objected to only hearsay news, he retorted that it was all they had themselves. But, unhappily for the Donatists, nothing from them direct has been preserved. Almost the whole of the third book, or chapter, of Optatus is occupied with the war under consideration. The burden of his remarks consists in explanations and apologies of the course of Macarius in his treatment of the Donatists, although he admitted in the beginning of his work that in many ways they were very roughly treated. According to Mosheim, after the repulse of Macarius with the royal bounties, he no longer used the soft voice of persuasion, but that of authority; and from what was said by Optatus we may infer he appointed a time for his coercive policy; and as the news spread abroad, thousands collected to witness the operation. The scene to be described was in the town of Bagnai, in the province of Numidia, a place distinguished for the number of the Donatists from the first. As Macarius was without a military force, he sought one of count Sylvester, from whom he obtained a company of armed horsemen, who came equipped with the death-dealing arms of the age, that is, quivers filled with arrows. As the business on hand was not the work of a day, this military company must be provided with quarters and supplies; concerning these no small difficulty was encountered, both from the magistrates and the citizens. The eventful and fearful crisis has arrived. Macarius, surrounded with his military aid, proclaimed the Catholic union; in other words, he commanded the Donatists to go into the Catholic church, unite with them in worship, and adopt the Catholic faith. Then, said Optatus to the Donatist bishop Parmenian, you all ran away; you were all in fear, and fled with precipitation and alarm; then again, said he, the words of the Psalmist were verified by you, "They were in fear where no fear was." Wherefore your bishops and their clergy all fled away, and some were killed. The most resolute and robust fled far away, where they were captured, and afterwards were sent into exile. The current language of historians, in their descriptions of this assault upon the Donatists, represents them as being a party to the war, whereas it was a war against them, not with them; and the frequent assertions of Optatus that all fled when the assault commenced upon them, is entirely against the idea of their fighting in their own defense. A people who suffer persecution, but do not persecute, was their stereotyped and cherished motto. This character for their community they everywhere proclaimed, and against everything warlike or coercive in religious concerns or with religious people, they always most earnestly contended. **Excepting in their defense of church purity against the lax and corrupt system of the Catholics, there was no point on which they were more at variance with Augustine than on his coercive and persecuting policy.** Nowhere in all church history can be found a more non-resisting people under the assaults of their enemies except by arguments. They were treated as

rebels by Macarius, and his mission and policy were to bring them into the Catholic church, peaceably if he could, forcibly if he must.

Comments of Catholic Authors on the Macarian War Against the Donatists

If, said Augustine, Macarius was unduly severe on the Donatists, and went beyond the Christian law for dealing with heretics, he had recourse to the law of the king, that he should fight for the Catholic union. I do not say, said he, that Macarius did nothing wrong, but your doings were much worse than his, against the Catholics through all Africa; say no more, brethren, of Macarian times; so far as our men were cruel, their acts were highly displeasing to us. Du Pin repeats a long list of the apologies by Optatus for Macarius's treatment of the Donatists, some of which, in his opinion, were not very solid. Optatus argued that the killing of the Donatists by Macarius in his war against them for heresy, was sanctioned by Moses killing three thousand for worshipping the golden calf, and Phinehas and Elijah for those they killed. Macarius, said Optatus, did not persecute like the heathen emperors, whose policy was to drive the Christians out of their churches, while that of Macarius was to drive the Donatists into the Catholic churches, where they might worship God together in the spirit of peace and unity.

The Following Remarks are From Protestant Writers

The opinion of Mosheim of the measures now under consideration is expressed in the following terms: "During the troubles with the Donatists in the reign of the emperor Constans, several steps were taken against this people, which the equitable and impartial will be at loss to reconcile with the dictates of humanity and justice, nor indeed do the Catholics themselves deny the truth of this assertion, and hence the complaints which the Donatists made of the cruelty of their adversaries." Relative to the measures of Macarius, and also of those of other imperial commissioners, who sought to convert the Donatists to the Catholic faith, a remark of Neander will doubtless properly apply: "It cannot be exactly determined," says he, "how much in all that was done, proceeded from the imperial edicts, and how much from the despotism, the passion, or the cruelty of individual commanders." Leontius, Ursacius, Macarius, Paulus Taurinus, and Romanus were the persecutors specifically named by the Donatist, in Numidia, and Bagnai is the principal town they have named for the effusion of their blood. But of none of their persecutors have they complained so much, as of Macarius; for the defense of whom all sorts of arguments have been employed by the Catholics, especially by Optatus and Augustine. How many of the Donatists were killed in this war, or were banished by the civil authorities, we have no information. In all Catholic descriptions there is apparently a studied silence on this subject. Optatus merely says some were slain, and others were banished. All the deaths doubtless were effected by the armed force above described. So notorious was this war that the Donatists referred to it simply naming it "Macarian times," and those concerned in it, or upheld it, they called "Macarians." These terms with the Catholics were exceedingly reproachful. Of this whole transaction we have no information from the Donatists themselves. None of their writings on this subject have come down to us, which would doubtless present a very different view of this cruel and terrible war. But, unhappily for the memory of this people, the true and real history of this ancient affair will never be made public.

Persecuting Measures of Augustine

I name these measures in this place for the purpose of describing them in connection with the scenes of the Macarian war, although they were put in operation about half a century later. They originated in the local councils or synods, as they were sometimes called, at one of which, in 403, a plan was proposed for a general conference with the Donatists for the discussion of the differences between them and the Catholics. To Augustine we are indebted for the history of these councils; in which, although young in the episcopal office, he was evidently their principal manager; and in all his reports of their doings it plainly appears that the magistrates of Africa were very remiss in executing the persecuting laws against the Donatists; one of which, he said, had not been enforced at all, except in Carthage. In the record of a council in Carthage in 404 we find the following statement: "It is now full time for the emperor to provide for the safety of the Catholic church, and prevent those rash men from terrifying the people, whom they cannot seduce. We think it is as lawful for us to ask assistance against them, as it was for Paul to employ a military force against the conspiracy of factious men." This is a new version of the conduct of the apostle Paul in the case here referred to.

A New Petition to the Emperor

Before the laws were sent into Africa, says Augustine, which compelled the heretics to come into the church, some of the brethren, among whom I was one, were of the opinion that although the madness of the Donatists raged everywhere, yet we should not petition the emperors to forbid any one simply to be of that heresy, by inflicting punishment on all who embraced it, but desire them to make a law to restrain them from offering violence to any that either preached or held the Catholic faith; which we thought might in some measure be done after this manner. The Theodosian law which decreed a fine of ten pounds of gold against the clergy of all heretics was Augustine's substitute in this case. This was a new idea; as thus far, as the Donatists denied being heretics, they had not been dealt with as such, and **Augustine appears to have been the first who attempted to subject them to the penalties of the Theodosian code.** To accomplish his plan he must have the authority of the imperial court, which was either at Rome or Ravenna; either of which was at a considerable distance from his residence in Africa. Before, says he, our legates could get to court, as new and grievous complaints against the Donatists had been made, the emperor, in his great piety, rather than suffer them to carry the badge of Christ against Christ, and err and perish, had published a new law against them. As soon as this new law, said Augustine, came into Africa, its influence was so great that the true mother received multitudes into her bosom, and only a hardened company retained their obstinate and unhappy animosity against her. The character of these new converts to the Catholic fold is thus described by the self-complacent bishop: At first, they maintained their new position by dissembling their opinions; but in process of time these dissemblers, by hearing the preaching of the Catholic truth, became true converts to the Catholic faith, especially after the conference at Carthage. This last position will hereafter be criticized by Augustine's own party. The remaining part of this chapter will be occupied with descriptions of the changed condition of the Donatists, under different reigns, to the time of Theodosius the Great.

Great Changes in Favor of the Donatists Under a New Emperor of the Constantine Race

Julianus Flavius Claudius was his Latin name; he was the grandson of Constantine the Great, and the nephew of his second son, named Constantius, whom he succeeded as emperor in 361. I can say but little of the early years of this singular man, usually called the Apostate. In his younger days his life was often in danger amidst the jealousies of the Constantine family. I can find no reliable account of what led him to renounce Christianity in favor of the idol system, the religion of his ancestors. It is said he revolted from the intolerance of the established church, and hated its persecutions. On the other hand, it is alleged he persecuted those whom he blamed as persecutors.

The Donatists Favored by Julian

On his accession to the throne the Donatist bishops transmitted to him a petition, in which they besought a ruler who required only justice, to rescind the unjust decrees that had been issued against them. There could be no difficulty, says Neander, in obtaining a favorable answer, since the petition perfectly agreed with the principles of the emperor. He therefore issued an edict, by which everything under the preceding reigns had been unlawfully undertaken against them was to be annulled. Optatus commented boastfully on the peace of the Catholic church in Africa, in the east, and beyond other seas, in the commencement of Julian's reign. He also spoke reproachfully of the emperor as a ruler, and he frequently said to the Donatists, they ought to be ashamed to ask or receive their freedom from such an unworthy emperor; their exile, he said, was what they deserved, and the peace of the church was owing to their being in foreign regions. Then, said Optatus, there were no schisms in the church, neither was it lawful for the pagans to perform their sacrilegious rites, and a peace well pleasing to God was enjoyed by all Christian people. But, said he, the same edict which restored liberty to you opened the idol temples, and yet you were not ashamed to partake of the common joy. By the term common joy, I suppose we are to understand that many others besides the Donatists rejoiced in the decree of religious freedom for all parties. Then, said Optatus, in his address to the Donatists, you became rabid; then you became angry, tearing in pieces the members of the church, and by subtle seductions and savage slaughters you provoked the sons of peace to make war against you. The details of other charges by this author I will here omit. But the whole list of the worst impeachments of the Donatists in the writings of Optatus, which are utterly at variance with his former mode of addressing them, are found in the descriptions of Augustine, and also in those of Du Pin, Fleury, and other Catholic authors of the more candid class; and also by most Protestant writers, wholly on the authority of Augustine. That it would have been more commendable for the Donatists to have remained in the exile to which they were doomed by Catholic emperors, than to have gained their freedom by the ill esteemed Julian, seems the logical conclusion of their reasoning. But did the orthodox bishops reason thus who were banished by Arian rulers?

Julian Contrasts the Laws of the Catholics With His Own, on Religious Freedom

I believe, said Julian in a letter to the inhabitants of Bostra, the leading men of the Gallieans would feel themselves more indebted to me than my predecessors in the government; for it happened under the latter that many of them were banished, persecuted, and deprived of their property; and indeed whole masses of heretics, as they are called, were swept off at a stroke; so that in Samosata, Cyzicus, Paphlagonia, Bithynia, Galatia, and among many other races of people, entire villages were made desolate. But, under my government, the fact has been the

very reverse; for the banished have been permitted to return, and their property is restored by our laws to those whose estates had been confiscated. Although the reign of Julian was but about two years, yet the favorable circumstances the Donatists enjoyed under it, continued under the short reign of his successor, Jovian; and nearly the same may be said of them under the Valentinians, Valens and Gratian, to the time of Theodosius the Great, whose reign of sixteen years included the four in which he was a colleague with Gratian. Although Theodosius was severe on all heretics, as the code which bears his name sufficiently shows, yet his most energetic measures were employed for the abolition of idolatry, and the destruction of the idol temples which were still numerous throughout the empire. Men, says Neander, of the ancient and noble families of Rome, ventured to raise their voice in favor of the religion of the eternal city. Among the advocates of the idol worship were magistrates and lawyers, the most eloquent orators and the most able writers. They claimed the same right to their temples as the Christians to their churches, and the same freedom for their worship. Theodosius died in 395. This was about the time that Augustine began to write against the Donatists, in which he attempted to expose them to the penalties of the Theodosian code against heretics, which character they always disowned, and which I do not find that Theodosius himself ever charged upon them.

Summary Description of Persecutions, by Historian Waddington

“In the fortunes of this people,” says this author, “do we not trace the usual history of persecution? In its commencement, fearful and reluctant; and, as it were, conscious of its corrupt origin, it irritates without depressing; it next suspends the attack; then the object rises up and takes courage.

“The same process is then repeated under circumstances slightly different with the same result. Then follows the passionate and sanguinary assault, which destroys the noblest of the recusants, while the most active and dangerous are preserved by hypocrisy and exile; and thus the sect spreads secretly and widely.

“The exertions of Augustine against the Donatists have attached to the character of that father the stain of persecution.”

This statement will be fully verified in the forthcoming descriptions of Augustine's own accounts of the various measures he devised for suppressing and exterminating this people.

NOTES

1. Neander's Ch. Hist., Vol. II, p. 195. The name of Gregory, and also that of Paul, the companion of Macarius in measures against the Donatists, is omitted.
2. Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I, p. 312.
3. Neander's Ch. Hist., vol. II, p. 196.
4. The distance from Carthage to Rome is about three hundred and fifty miles; the time occupied in the voyage, according to Mr. Amos Perry, late Consul to Tunis, might be a few days or a considerable number, dependent on wind and weather.
5. Neander's Ch. Hist., Vol. II, p. 196.

6. Optatus, p. 49.
7. Neander's Ch. Hist., Vol. II, p. 52.
8. Waddington's Church History, pp. 170–171 (Library of Useful Knowledge).

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 4

Extracts From the Writings of the Donatists

That this people had able defenders of their cause, will be evident from the selections from their writings which I am preparing to make. The works from which my selections are to be made have long been lost, and all that has been preserved of them is now found in the works of Augustine, who lived in the time of most of the writers which will be named. These passages are interspersed in the copious controversial writings against this people. They were originally quoted for the purpose of arguing against the sentiments they contain; and by this means there has been transmitted to us, by their adversary, a large amount of the veritable writings of these ancient and hitherto entirely neglected people, which otherwise we could never have seen. From the passages in Augustine's writings the following extracts will be made. Strange as it may seem, no author, even of those who have shown some friendship to the Donatists, has ever, to my knowledge, made any reference to the writings under consideration, so creditable to the talents and religious sentiments of their authors, and which are so conspicuous, always in italics, amidst hundreds of the Latin folio pages of Augustine's works, in his controversies with the Donatists. Some small works by Donatus, the first acting bishop of the Donatists at Carthage, have been referred to. Parmenian was his successor. By him the first large work against the Catholics was published. This was first answered by Optatus. Against Parmenian, Augustine published his first large work against the Donatists; and from what I find of the language ascribed to Parmenian, my extracts will be made.

This first treatise of Augustine against the Donatists was published but a few years after he was ordained a bishop. The work consists of three books or chapters. The main object of the author appears to have been the defense of his lax system of church discipline in opposition to the strict rules of his opponents, as on this point the parties were always at variance. In his caption he says: "In three books against the epistle of Parmenian, bishop of the Donatists of Carthage, the successor of Donatus, a great question I have discussed and solved." This great question with this great church leader of his day among the Catholics was, "Whether, in the union and communion of the same sacraments, bad members would contaminate the good; and in what manner they would not contaminate them." Another question which this ancient church manager was equally in earnest to discuss and solve was, "How the apostle is to be understood in what he said to the Corinthians about putting away an evil person from among themselves." According to the Greek language, he said, it may be understood that the evil of their hearts was to be put away, instead of a bad member. All this kind of reasoning, which in different forms will appear in the following narratives, was

intended to favor the lax system of discipline for which Augustine always and everywhere so earnestly contended.

Quotations From the Work of Parmenian Against the Catholics

“Woe unto those who put evil for good, and good for evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened that he cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear.

“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

“For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

“None calleth for justice, nor pleadeth for the truth; they trust in vanity, and they speak lies; they conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity.

“Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.

“The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings; they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

“Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

“Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out from the midst of her; be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.

“I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.

“I have hated the congregation of evil doers; I will not sit with sinners.

“Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men, in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.”

The work of Parmenian does not contain so many passages suitable for these brief selections as those hereafter to be noticed.

Quotations From the Writings of Petilian Against the Catholics

These writings, like all other of the Donatists which have been preserved and have come down to us, are dispersed in the writings of Augustine, for the purpose of refuting them. The whole amount of matter thus preserved of the veritable writings of Petilian alone, would make a pamphlet of no inconsiderable size. They are without any order as to subjects, but I shall arrange my selections under appropriate heads, and will begin with the **Subject of Baptism**.

They who throw against us a two-fold baptism under the name of baptism, have polluted their own souls with a criminal bath. He who accuses me of baptizing twice, does not himself truly baptize once. We by our baptism put on Christ; you

by your contagion put on Judas the traitor. He who receives the faith from an infidel, receives not faith but guilt. Everything depends on its origin and root; trees are known by their fruit. The character of a baptizer must be well known. The apostle Paul says there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; this one baptism we openly profess, and it is certain that they who think there are two, are insane.

The most important article on this subject was the following: That Petilian, as he said, might fully discuss the baptism of the Trinity, he referred to the command of Christ to his apostles to teach the nations, and to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In contrasting the apostolic teaching and baptism with those of his opponents, the Donatist bishop addressed his Catholic adversary in the following pungent and pertinent terms: Who, O thou betrayer, dost thou teach? Him whom thou dost capitally condemn? Who, O thou betrayer, dost thou teach? Him whom thou dost slay? Finally, who dost thou teach? Him whom thou mayest have made a homicide? Thus far the business of teaching was the subject of discussion; that of baptism followed. How, said Petilian to his opponent, dost thou baptize in the name of the Trinity? Thou who canst not call God thy father, since Christ the Lord said: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. Thou who hast not peace of mind, hast not God for thy father. But how dost thou baptize in the name of the Son, thou who betrayest him, and who dost not imitate the Son of God in any sufferings, nor in any crosses? But how dost thou baptize in the name of the Holy Spirit, which descended upon those apostles who had not been traitors? Since, therefore, God is not your father, nor are you truly born from the water of baptism, and no one of you is inwardly born; neither, O ye impious men, have you a church father or mother; as such, then ought I not to baptize you, although, just as the Jews, in their daily ablutions, as it were, baptize their bodies, you may wash yourselves a thousand times.

Petilian on the Persecutions of the Catholics

Ye progeny of vipers, how can you escape the judgment of Gehenna? David, in describing your race, says: 'Their throat is an open sepulchre, and they flatter with their tongues. The poison of asps is under their lips; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, and their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have known; the fear of God is not before their eyes. The Lord Christ admonishes us to beware of false prophets who come to us in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are rapacious wolves. By their fruits you may know them. So, verily, O unprincipled persecutor, with whatever veil of goodness you may shroud yourself; with whatever pretense of peace upon your lips you may make war against us; and however much you may allure men with your false union, so far as you practice falsehood and deception, you are truly a son of the devil whilst you imitate the works of your father. Now, said Petilian to his opponent, it is not wonderful that you should falsely assume the name of a bishop, since it is the true custom of Satan to transform himself into an angel of light. Do you think to serve God by killing us with your own hands? Ye err, miserable men, if you think thus, for the ministers of God are not executioners. When you kill our bodies we have a two-fold baptism, but the second is of blood, like that which Christ endured. Be ashamed, be ashamed, O ye persecutors, that you make martyrs like Christ, with blood, after their true baptism of water. The law says thou shalt not kill. Cain killed one brother, but how many brothers have been killed by you? Did the apostles ever persecute any one? Did Christ ever betray any one? Christ in dying taught us how to die, not to

kill. The apostle Paul tells us of the abundance of his own sufferings, not what he made others suffer. Christ taught us to suffer wrong, not requite it.

Petilian on the Beatitudes Against the Catholics

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” You who are inflated with riches, pursue us with malicious fury. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” You savage men have lost heaven and earth together. “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” You, our executioners, make many mourn, while you do not mourn yourselves. “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Your righteousness consists in thirsting for our blood. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” When can I call you merciful, while you continue to punish just men? And whilst you do this, do you not pollute their souls with your most iniquitous communion? “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” When will you see God, who, with foul malice, nourish blindness of heart? “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” You frame peace in wickedness, and seek union with war. “Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” You are not blessed, but you make blessed martyrs; with souls heaven is replenished, the memory of whose bodies flourishes in the earth. This peculiar article of the able and distinguished writer among the Donatists, was followed with the recital of all the woes pronounced by Christ against the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees. O, ye miserable traitors, ought not the scripture to be fulfilled in you? Paul, the apostle, in his account of the immense persecutions which he suffered by all nations, says the greatest were from false brethren. In the description of charity, this writer, after enumerating all its excellent traits of character mentioned by the apostles, says, it does not persecute, nor inflame the minds of emperors against their subjects, nor seize on the property of others, nor kill men whom it would rob. Behold, said Petilian, a most ample warning to all persecutors: “Put up thy sword into its sheath, O Peter, said Jesus, for they who take the sword shall die with the sword.”

In confirmation of this doctrine he gave many examples of distinguished persecutors of the Donatists, who, in various ways, came to untimely ends. “The Lord God never delights in human blood.” “What have you to do with the king of this world?” said Petilian to his opponents. And in his comments on the injury which Christianity always reason to apprehend from the kingly race, an entire folio page is employed. “Where,” said he, “is the law of God, and what becomes of your Christianity, amidst the slaughters and deaths which you command and execute? “What is the reason, and wherein is the consistency, of your calling us heretics, although falsely, and yet of being importunate for our communion?” “Of the two characters ascribed to us,” said Petilian, “choose at length, in which you hold us. “If you say we are innocent, why do you follow us with the sword? “Or if you say we are criminal, why seek after us as though we were innocent?” “O, most subtle dilemma, or, rather, most impertinent loqua city,” said Augustine. Petilian, in the language of David, said to his opponent, “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” We do not trust in man, said Augustine, but as much as we are able we admonish them to trust in the Lord; neither do we put confidence in princes, but as much as we are able we admonish princes to trust in the Lord; and if we ask of princes anything in aid of the church, yet we do not put our confidence in them. Neither did the apostle Paul put his trust in that tribune as in a prince from whom he obtained armed soldiers for a protection against a band of assassins at

Jerusalem. This theory of Paul's seeking an armed protection will appear hereafter, when it will be examined.

A Pointed Address of Petilian to His Opponents

Miserable men, indeed, I call you, who seek after our goods, instead of our souls, and are overwhelmed with fear respecting possessions thus obtained. We who are poor in spirit have no fear concerning riches, but fear them; but having nothing, we possess all things. We who live in the fear of the Lord have no fear of any punishments you may inflict upon us with the sword. Finally, the only thing we fear from you which we strive to flee from is your most injurious communion, with which you would slay our souls. The Lord himself has said, fear not those who kill the body, but fear him rather, who is able to send the body and soul into the Gehenna of fire.

Petilian's Closing Address

Having expatiated quite freely on the errors of the Catholics, as he esteemed them, he thus addressed his own community: "Come to the true church, O ye people, and flee away from all traitors, if you are not willing to perish with them.

"I baptize their members, as having an imperfect baptism, and as in reality unbaptized.

"They will receive my members, but far be it from being done, as truly baptized, which they would not do at all, if they could discover any faults in our baptism.

"See, therefore, that the baptism which I give you may be held so holy that not any sacrilegious enemy will have dared to destroy it."

Cresconius Against the Catholics

This able defender of the Donatists was a grammarian, that is, a literary teacher, as that term was then understood; and although a layman, yet he appears to have been very thoroughly acquainted with the history and principles of his own people; and from his laborious work, which was reviewed by Augustine, my extracts will be made. Cresconius was probably a member of Petilian's church in Constantina, whose work against the Catholics he ably defended. He and Petilian and Augustine were all in the field at the same time with large works.

Cresconius Against Augustine

"You," said the Donatist to the Catholic, "with intolerable arrogance, have said that you alone can terminate a controversy which to others has appeared interminable, and must therefore be left to the judgment of God. You, single-handed," continued Cresconius, "promised to finish a dispute which, after so many years; after the labors of so many judges and arbitrators; after the learned disputations of the bishops on both sides, before prominent men, could never be finished! "Since," continued Cresconius, "you well know the thing in question cannot be finished by you, why do you assume a useless labor? Why enter upon an empty undertaking? Why encounter a vain and fruitless task? Do you not make a great mistake in thus proposing to do what you cannot accomplish?"

Neander, in commenting on this discussion, says:

“Cresconius was not so much out of the way when he censured the confidence of Augustine, who professed to be able to dispose, so easily, of a controversy, on which, for so long a time, so many things had been said on both sides.” Cresconius, like all authors of his party, had one Lord, one faith, one baptism, for his motto; and to this he added, an uncorrupted and true Catholic church. The claim of Catholic for their church was quite often made by the Donatists, which claim was very annoying to the Catholics. All the opponents of Augustine among the Donatists, whether of the clergy or laity, combated his lax system of discipline; generally, in a serious manner; but occasionally quite otherwise, as the following example will illustrate.

Sharp Comments of Cresconius on Augustine's Defense of the Validity of Baptism by Bad Ministers, Who Were Known to be Such

There is no difference between a baptism administered by a drunken priest and that of an apostle, was the avowed doctrine of Augustine; a sentiment much like this, in his treatise against Petilian, was thrown at him by Cresconius. Forsooth, said Augustine, thou seemest to thyself to have found out where thou mightest spread out thy eloquence in reference to that which I laid down in my epistle to Petilian, namely, that all who are baptized, should place their hope in Christ, whether the baptizer be a man of faith or a perfidious man. After this comment on his own position thus referred to, Augustine proceeded, complainingly, to repeat the free and peculiar comments upon the said position, by his opponent, of which the following is a correct version: “O, said Cresconius, the excellent power of the Catholic priesthood! “O, the praiseworthy precepts of righteousness of the Good Father! “Thou mayest, says he, make no difference between a man of faith and a perfidious man; and a pious and an impious man may seem to thee the same. “And it is no profit to live according to good morals; because whatever is lawful for a righteous man, an unrighteous man also can fully perform. “What, inquired Cresconius, can be said more iniquitous than this precept? “Can a man of a spotted character purify another, a filthy character wash another clean, an impure man make another pure, a faithless man impart faith, and a criminal make another innocent?”

This whole subject had been quite freely discussed by the parties previously, in detail; it was also topic of frequent and earnest discussion between other Donatists and the famous church leader of Hippo, who, in his correspondence with Rogatius, the head of the Rogatians, said: Perhaps, among your twelve bishops and their clergy, you have not one drunken priest. From the great corruption of the Catholic clergy, probably arose the policy, if not the necessity, of tolerating the loose clerical morals above referred to. Among the remarks of Cresconius in defense of the practice of the repetition of baptism, he referred to the baptism of the twelve disciples who had been baptized by John. Other Donatist writers did the same. All of them seemed to take it for granted that the twelve disciples were really baptized again. The objective remarks of Augustine to free himself from the dilemma in which he found himself involved by the comments and the peculiar logic of his shrewd opponent are too long to be repeated. He complained that Cresconius used his own words for the purpose of constructing arguments against him. If this was so, the bishop was paid in his own coin, in his dealing with the Donatists. With respect to the deductions of Cresconius, whether real or fanciful, from Augustine's positions, he said they did not wholly correspond with his sentiments or his writings.

Quotations from the Writings of Gaudentius Against the Catholics

“All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

“The time will come when whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service.

“Our enemies boast of being in peace and unity, but their peace is gained by war, and their union is stained with blood.

“For the teaching of the people of Israel the omnipotent God sent prophets; he did not enjoin this service on kings; the Lord Christ, the Saviour of souls, sent fishermen, not soldiers, for the propagation of his gospel; he who alone can judge the quick and the dead has never sought the aid of a military force.”

On Man's Free Will

“God created man free in his own image. How, then, am I to be deprived of that by human lordship which God has bestowed on me? What a sacrilege, that human arrogance should take away what God has bestowed on me, and idly boast of doing this on God's behalf? “It is a great offence against God, when he is defended by men.

“What must he think of God who would defend him with outward force? Is it that God is unable to punish offenses against himself?

“Hear what the Lord says: Peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. “The peace of the world must be introduced among contending nations by arms and the force of war. The peace of Christ invites the willing, with wholesome mildness; it never forces men against their wills.”

In reply to this eloquent and forcible argument of Gaudentius, in defense of a primordial principal of the Donatists, Augustine, with entire unfairness, reasoned in the following style: According to these most fallacious and most vain reasonings of yours, said he, the reins would be relaxed, and all classes of transgressors might sin with impunity, without restraint, and without correction; and the king would have no power or control over his kingdom, for the correction of any offenses; the general over his army; the judge in his province; the master with his servant; the husband with his wife; the father with his son. In the midst of this controversy, Augustine said to his opponent that he knew not the scriptures nor the power of God, which induced him to contend so strongly for man's free will, and against coercion in religious concerns. The Ninevites, he said, were compelled to repentance against their wills by the power of their king. The term “compel them to come in” to the feast, in the parable of the supper, he held as available for his theory of coercion. His exposition of this parable was in the following terms: “By highways, we are to understand, heresies; by hedges, schisms. “But in this case,” said he, “we may be sure, highways signify diverse opinions, and hedges, mean perverse opinions.”

I have thus given specimens of the writings of the prominent men amongst the Donatists, most of whom appear in the foregoing narratives. Enough of these writings has been copied to exhibit the ability of this people to defend their cause, and much is it to be lamented that so small a portion of their writings has been preserved. But scarcely any of all those from which I have made selections have hitherto been accessible to English readers, as they are in the Latin works of

Optatus and Augustine; and although all that was published of the Donatists was intended by these men to operate against them, yet so far as their principles were concerned on church discipline, religious freedom, and whatever is connected with the confederacy of priests and princes, it was directly the reverse, and objectively they established the evangelical character of the Donatists. Augustine's theory that the strict discipline of the Donatists would split the Catholic church into a thousand schisms, was a high commendation of the reformers, and thus, as it often happened, his censure was their praise. There was an early writer among the Donatists, Tichonius, all of whose writings were lost. He was a grammarian to whom Augustine ascribed a sprightly genius and copious eloquence. To this man Parmenian's epistle was addressed.

NOTES

1. Op. August., Tome 9, p. 10.
2. Op. August., Tome 9, p. 242.
3. Op. August., Tome 9, pp. 206–336.
4. Augustine gave a paraphrase of the original.
5. Op. August., Tome 9, p. 494.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 5

The Conference at Carthage, in Africa, between the Catholics and the Donatists

We now enter upon the details, of considerable length, of one of the most singular and laborious transactions in the history of the Donatists. It was now about one hundred years since their origin as a separate community, during which time their churches were spread over all North Africa, amidst persecutions of various kinds. Their churches had often been taken from them by armed men, but now a plan was laid to gain possession of them for the Catholics, by a legal process. The bishop of Hippo, the contriver of the plan, was then in the full exercise of his episcopal powers over the whole country, in which Honorius, a son of the then late Theodosius the Great, occupied the imperial throne. This young emperor was a zealous Catholic, and Augustine easily obtained an edict for the conference, to be described, which was to be composed only of the bishops of North Africa, all of whom, both Catholics and Donatists, were included in the summons.

The Form of the Edict

Within four months the parties were commanded to meet at Carthage. Marcellinus, a friend of Augustine, was to preside in the conference, and to act as judge. He was appointed to this office in the edict, in which he was recognized as the special and confidential friend of the emperor. At this time the Donatists were numerous, and in a prosperous condition, notwithstanding the

many persecutions to which they had been exposed, and the vexatious hindrances to their progress during the reigns of all the Constantine dynasty except that of Julian. Augustine valued himself on his logical skill, which having failed to induce the Donatists voluntarily to engage in what they deemed useless disputations, the present plan was devised, and to secure their attention, in the edict was inserted the following rule: **"If the Donatist bishops, after being three times invited, still declined taking any part in the conference, their conduct should be interpreted to signify a consciousness of being unable to defend their cause, and their communities therefore should be compelled to unite with the Catholic church. On the other hand, any who might comply with the invitation, should at some future time receive again the churches of which they were then deprived."** This promise, says Neander, was shamefully violated. What conditions for what Augustine maintained was a free meeting by the request of the Donatists! But as the measure was by an imperial edict, the entrapped people, rather than hazard the loss of their churches, complied with the demand, and early in June, 411, there might be seen in Carthage two hundred and seventy-nine Donatist bishops, with two hundred and eighty-six bishops of the Catholics. This company comprised all the bishops of both parties except the aged and infirm, and those who were hindered on the way. It was a long time, however, before this singular meeting was organized.

The Overtures of the Catholics to the Donatists

These I will give according to Neander's views, not my own. "Their bishops," says he, "made overtures to the Donatists which were calculated to inspire their confidence." All hollow, in my opinion. "These bishops declared they were ready to resign their bishoprics, and to surrender them into the hands of the Donatists alone, in case the latter gained the victory in the conference. Such a proposition, it may be granted, required but little self-denial, since, beyond doubt, they were well convinced that the case supposed could never happen. There was more in the other proposals, that if the cause of the Donatists was lost, and if their bishops would come over to the Catholic church they should be recognized in their episcopal character, and stand on the same level with the Catholic bishops in the exercise of their functions. But if the communities were not satisfied with this, both should resign their dignities, and the Donatists and Catholics, now united, choose a new bishop. 'Be brethren with us in the Lord's inheritance,' said Augustine; 'let us not, for the sake of preserving our own stations, hinder the peace of Christ.'" What would all this hollow talk amount to with the non-confiding Donatists? "Augustine preached in Carthage before the commencement of the conference, two discourses, in which he endeavored to inspire the Catholics there with love and gentleness towards the Donatists, and called on them sedulously to avoid everything which might be calculated to give offence to their excitable feelings, or to arouse their passions. 'Their eyes are inflamed,' said he; 'they must be treated prudently and with forbearance. Let no one enter into controversy with the other--let no one at this moment even defend his faith by disputation, lest some spark from the controversy kindle into a great flame; lest occasion of offence be given to those who seek occasion. Do you hear reviling language, endure it; be willing not to have heard it; be silent. Do you say he brings charges against my bishop, and shall I be silent? Yes, be silent; repay not revilings with revilings, but pray for him.'" Let the bishops, said the president, signify to the people in their sermons to keep themselves quiet and be silent; I will publish my sentence, and expose it to all the people of Carthage.

Thus far the whole company appears to have been merely an informal gathering from all parts of North Africa, who were engaged in quite free remarks on the business for which they had been collected together; many of them, we may suppose, had never before met each other face to face, and from Augustine's efforts to hinder the parties from disputes, we may infer that he feared his whole project would be defeated. The most solemn preparations, says Waddington, were made by the people of Carthage to give dignity and weight to this great and unusual convocation. This, of course, was by the Catholics. The undignified and unpropitious character of this primary meeting is doubtless well described in the following terms: "Amidst such a multitude on both sides," says Neander, "the transactions could hardly be conducted in a quiet and orderly manner." But in what he terms "wearisome and fruitless disputes about matters relating to the form of transacting the business," the greater part of the first day was spent. As yet no organization was formed, and the whole company of almost six hundred bishops, doubtless with many of their friends, were concerned in this promiscuous assembly.

The Order of the Conference Announced

This order, according to imperial command, Marcellinus announced was arranged according to the common mode of judicial proceedings, in which deputies were chosen by each of the parties in controversy, to act and to plead for them; accordingly, he said: "There shall be seven bishops on each side to manage the debates. There shall be seven other bishops on each side for their counsel if needed, on condition that they be silent while the first are speaking. There shall be four ecclesiastical notaries on each side, to make the records, who shall succeed each other by turns. For a further safety there shall be four bishops on each side, to observe the notaries and preserve the records." Thus only forty-four bishops were retained of the whole number who came to Carthage. The names of the seven debaters on the Catholic side were Aurelius, Alypius, Augustinus, Possidius, Vicentius, Fortunatus, and Fortunatianus. On the Donatist side the debaters were Primianus, Petilianus, Emeritus, Deodatus, Montanus, Gaudentius, and Probatas. I have thus given the full Latin names of the principal debaters, and as they were selected each party for its own side, they were doubtless accounted among their most able men, for defending their causes. Augustine was the chief speaker among the Catholics, and Petilian with the Donatists. The distrustful Donatists, says Neander, who were prejudiced against the whole business, at first positively refused to enter into such an arrangement. They declared that the judicial mode of proceeding was not applicable to their spiritual concern. But at length, being compelled to yield, they chose their own men.

At this point I will give a **brief description of the manner in which it is supposed, from the history of these times, the records of this conference were made and preserved, about a thousand years before the art of printing was discovered.** The scribes, or notaries, as they were called, made their entries in short-hand, somewhat like modern reporters. This was done with styles or graters, on strips of boards waxed over for the purpose. These strips were called tables or tablets. The records thus made were afterwards transferred to parchment, the material for ancient books. When one set of tables was full, another was brought in with new notaries. As fast as these singular records were full, the tables, or books, as they were also sometimes called, were rolled up in wrappers and sealed, to preserve them from injury or corruption. All speaking was suspended while they were changing the notaries. "We have filled the books," was the signal for the change.

The Enrollment of the Names of the Delegates to the Conference

This was a long and tedious business, which I will briefly describe. In the first place, there are no indications that those who came to the conference had certificates of their appointment, or that there were lists of the members on either side; but instead of this, they went promiscuously to the president, where their names were enrolled, and the places of their churches. The same was done with respect to the names of absent bishops, and the location of their churches. Besides answering to their names, the members on both sides often had much to say of their difficulties at their homes, on the same ground, and of their complaints of each other, of which the following sharp speeches may serve as specimens: Alypius, a Catholic, said he wished that in his place they might rejoice in their former union, as they rejoiced in other places. A bad union, said the Donatist Petilian, of innocence and crime, which cannot be in union. I have no traitors among my people, said a Donatist, meaning the Catholics. There have never been any Donatists among my people, said a Catholic. Because they have all been excluded by violence, said a Donatist. I call God to witness that is a lie, said a Catholic. Your holiness, said the president, will deign only to say whether there is a Donatist bishop now in your place. Among the complaints of the Catholics of the Donatists was that of their rebaptizing one of their bishops who was a nonagenarian. The accounts of these singular transactions preparatory to the full organization of this professedly religious convocation occupy about twenty folio pages of the "Works of Optatus," in which they are recorded.

The First Session of the Conference

All the meetings now were held with closed doors, in a hall of one of the public baths of Carthage. With the company to manage the debates, there entered about twenty men of various ranks in the imperial government of Africa. This large company of state officials was in attendance according to the edict of the emperor, as coadjutors, if necessary, of the president, Marcellinus. In the opening of this first session of the conference, the president, by the order of the emperor, made a proposal to the Donatists in the following terms: If they wanted confidence in him, they were at liberty to choose another person of equal or superior rank to preside along with him. It is none of our business, said Petilian, to ask for another judge, since in fact we did not ask for the first. This business belongs to those who have been the contrivers of this whole affair. Petilian, in the next place, made an urgent request of the president for a definite statement of the subjects to be discussed in the debates, that they might understand what answers they ought to make. The only reply of the president to this very proper and reasonable request was, that the subjects for discussion would best be made known as the business went on. At this point Petilian commented with his usual boldness and freedom on the injurious effects of the imperial court's decrees which called men from their quiet homes, and subjected them to the pains and privations of distant journeys from all parts of a wide-spread country. Although the Donatists had chosen their men, and had entered the hall with the company above described, yet they now made an effort to free themselves from their unwelcome position by pleading that the time was past in which the conference was to be finished, which was not yet begun. In reply to this argument, the president informed them that by a second edict the emperor had extended the time for the conference, if it should be found needful. Having failed in this effort, these reluctant men, who were thus shut off from all intercourse with their companions, again urged their request that the conference should be managed

with open doors. If they must engage in the proposed verbal controversy, they desired that their companions, who were not permitted to take any part in its doings, and also the public, might have an opportunity to witness them, that they might judge of the principles and merits of the parties. The only argument of the Catholics against an open door was the danger of tumult and disturbance. For almost a whole day, said the Donatist bishop Emeritus, we have been together in an open and promiscuous assembly, and instead of any tumult and disturbance from us, prayer has been continually ascending to God and heaven from our hearts. There has not been, neither will there be, any tumult or disturbance on our side with open doors, said the Donatist bishop Petilian. But as the president favored the excluding system, the discussion of the subject was at once closed. The fear of danger to the Catholic cause, by a public exposure of their treatment of the Donatists, was probably at the bottom of the opposition to the open door for which the Donatists so earnestly contended. After a moderate amount of debating by the parties of a preliminary character, and the reading of a number of very lengthy documents by the Catholics to forestall their claim to an apostolic succession, the conference was adjourned for six days, that the notaries might put their records in order.

NOTES

1. "Codices binos implevimus." Opta. p. 90.
2. In the hall in which the Conference was held it is said that the famous Cyprian was condemned to martyrdom.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 6

The Second and Third Days of the Conference

The same company of state officers entered the hall with the president, and soon after came in the parties to manage the debates, all of whom Marcellinus invited to take their seats as he took his own. This was done by the Catholics. But, said Petilian, we do not sit in the absence of our fathers, meaning those who were excluded from the conference, since, said he, it is prohibited by the divine law. Neither, again said he, can we be willing to sit with such adversaries. Neander supposes the divine law referred to in this case was the saying of the Psalmist, in Psalm xxvi. 4,9: "I have not sat with vain persons. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." Since, said Marcellinus to the outspoken Petilian, your holiness has slighted my request for you to be seated, respect for so many bishops forbids me to be seated myself, and I will officiate standing; thereupon he caused his chair to be removed. The Catholic bishops at the same time arose from their seats, and thus for some time the bishops of both parties appeared in a standing posture. You do me much honor, said Petilian to the president. Nothing is said of the course of the large company of official statesmen; they probably remained in their seats, and viewed with amazement such a singular transaction by bishops in the opening scenes of a professedly religious conference. Petilian continued his remarks in the following terms: This whole business, said he to the president, is of your seeking, not of ours. We claim to be bishops of the truth of

Christ our Lord, as it has often been announced in our public acts. We justly venerate the memory of our predecessor Donatus, a man of a martyr's fame, and an ornament of the church over which he presided in this city. In reply to the assertion of Petilian that the Donatists claimed to be bishops of the truth of Christ their Lord, a Catholic said that this was a thing for them to prove, rather than to boast of it. In the free exchange of impeachments by the parties, when the Catholics accused the Donatists of causing delays in the business of the conference, they renewed an old complaint against them; of delaying to give up many of their churches, which they had been ordered to by an edict a long time ago. Most of this short session was occupied in hearing the reports of the notaries respecting the records of the first day. On this subject the main question was, how much time would be needful to put said records in order; and in the end the conference was again adjourned for six days.

The Third Day of the Conference

The same company of state officers as usual entered the hall with the president, who were followed by the debating companies of both sides. The records of this day would make a pamphlet of no inconsiderable size. Some portions of the arguments I shall refer to, while for the most part page after page is occupied with debates which would be of no sort of interest to readers at the present time. In the first place, the emperor's edict for the conference was now again read by the request of the Catholics the third time, at the close of which the Donatists made comments in the following style: so it seems, said Petilian, according to the tenor of the edict, the name of the Donatists is to be erased and blotted out. This was a literal version of the document. Since, said Emeritus, the imperial rescript for this conference has been read, let the prayer of the petition for it also be read. To this very reasonable request the president replied: Your holiness, I think, must know that in pragmatic rescripts it is not customary to insert the prayers of the petitioners. In many of the following pages the main question of discussion between the parties was,

Who Petitioned for the Conference?

The measure had evidently become so unpopular that the Catholics labored hard to associate the Donatists with them in it, while they on their part most resolutely denied the charge of their adversaries, and in repelling it they charged them with downright lying to the emperor respecting them; and thus obtained the edict which they sought. The Donatists, in their familiar addresses to their opponents, said: "Now tell us when you sent your petition, by whom you sent it, and what you petitioned for." "That in it you lied to the most clement emperor about us," said Petilian, "Is sufficiently plain, since you now hesitate and refuse to make a full disclosure of the nature of your petition for this conference, and the names of the men by whom you sent it. But," continued Petilian, "all people may have known, and all Africa may now know, that all your communications to the emperor respecting us were against us." Petilian still further, in censorious terms, said to his opponents that all people might understand that being unwilling openly to expose their falsehood to the emperor respecting the Donatists about the conference, they devised delays, lest at length the truth might appear in spite of their juggling tricks and misty arguments. The burden of the complaint of the Donatists relative to the petition under consideration consisted in their full conviction that in it they were represented to the emperor as being desirous for the conference, which they most strenuously opposed from the first of the projected measure. All the accusations of falsehood on the part of the Catholics

by the Donatists, in this complicated business, were made before all the members of the conference. But in no case did the accused party stand up in their own defense, nor were the Donatists called to order as false accusers. As the president, of course, favored the Catholics, they, in the end, proved their absurdity and injustice by pretending the Donatists joined them in petitioning for the conference, and refused them anything about their own petition.

Debates on the Character of Caecilian

On this discussion the parties were led back about one hundred years, to the beginning of their controversy. Augustine, after stating his complaints of the Donatists for their censures of Caecilian and his party, made them the following proposal: If they would recede from their censures, he promised that the character of Caecilian should be examined and judged by divine testimonies, or, in other words, by scripture rules. If they would not recede, then the examination would be made with secular evidence, or the records of an old proconsular tribunal. To this proposal Augustine demanded a categorical answer. I cannot reply to your prolix oration, said Emeritus. Of course the secular mode was begun, although the proconsular records were wanting, and when a paper was presented, "Did the clerk draw it from the public desk or his own?" was the question. We shall soon see that Augustine was paid in his own coin, in his demand of a categorical answer.

Sharp Debates About Caecilian and the Ordainer of Augustine

Who is the manager of this cause, said the Donatist bishop Petilian; is it a son of Caecilian, or not? Call no man father on the earth, so we have heard, so we have read, and so we have preached to the people, said Augustine. Who are you, again said Petilian; are you a son of Caecilian, or not; and does the criminality of Caecilian adhere to you, or not? I am in the church of which Caecilian was the bishop till his death, said Augustine. At this point I would inform the reader that in Patristic language the terms father and mother are to be understood in an ecclesiastical sense. Whence was your origin and who was your father, for if you have denied your father you make yourself a heretic? said Petilian. We are in the church of which Caecilian was the bishop till the day of his death, again said Augustine. We recite his name at the altar. We commemorate his memory as the memory of a brother, not as of a father, or of a mother. Is Caecilian, in church relation, your father or mother? said Petilian. I say Caecilian was a brother; a good brother, if he was good; a bad brother, if he was bad; but if you wish for my opinion of him, I believe he was innocent, and that he was assailed with false criminations, which cannot injure the church, if, perhaps, they were true, which by no means, said Augustine, are you able to demonstrate. These are ambiguous words, said Petilian, and such as you have used through the whole day. Will you at some time at length expressly declare whether Caecilian is the father of your church, from whom its progenies have proceeded? For nothing can be born without a generator, nor begin without a head, nor grow without its own root. And, addressing himself to Marcellinus, your nobility, said Petilian, perceives that my opponent is more of a heretic than myself, since he has no father, and by his own decision he has disowned the father he once had. I have a head, said Augustine, which is Christ. Let it be more carefully demonstrated, said the president, whether Caecilian is your father or mother? I have a head, again said Augustine. Who ordained you as a bishop? said Petilian. Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers, said Montanus, a Donatist. From the above request of Petilian for his antagonist to give the name of

the bishop who ordained him to the episcopal office a long and singular discussion arose, in which numbers were engaged; the Catholics against, and the Donatists for, the disclosure of the name in question; while Augustine himself, after various evasive arguments, said the demand was superfluous, and was designed to expose him to reproaches with which his ears and his heart were well acquainted. From this we may suppose the unnamed bishop was then in bad repute, which he seemed to fear would be attached to him. Omitting further details of this controversy, I will say that he who so lately demanded a categorical answer from his opponents, by their importunity and the advice of the president was induced to give such an answer himself. Megalius, the primate of the Catholic churches of Numidia, he said, ordained him, who was then qualified for that office. Behold, said he to Petilian, I have answered your question. Now follow me with your prepared reproaches. Behold, I have named my ordainer. Now bring forth your calumnies. What a change in the language of the dogmatical bishop!

NOTES

1. Mentitum te igitur Clementissimo Imperatori, sat constat, etc. Optatus on the Conference, p. 72.
2. Ecce respondi. Prosequere, profer quae praeparas, etc.
3. Ecce dixi ordinatorem meum, profer jam calumnias tuas. Optatus, p. 85.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 7

Closing Scenes of the Conference mostly By the Donatists

In my first arrangement, the contents of this chapter were all embraced in Chapter VI, but on a second thought, as these contents are almost wholly occupied with the sayings and doings of the Donatists, I judged it suitable that they should be in a chapter by themselves, in which the reader may find a pretty full exposition of the scriptural and evangelical principles of this people, and also of their ability in defending them.

The Letter of the Donatists to the Conference

We are now approaching the close of this singular meeting. On the presentation of this letter, the following incidents occurred: The officiating scribe had hardly begun to read the document when Emeritus exclaimed, He does not read, he does not distinguish the sense. Let them read it themselves, said Augustine; we can concede to them what they were unwilling to concede to us. It is immaterial by whom the paper is read, said Marcellinus, the president. We do not doubt the fidelity of the reader, but we object to his pronunciation, said Petilian. I will read the letter, said Habetdeum, a Donatist bishop. Read it, said the president. The letter was addressed to the president, with his full name and title thus: "To the well beloved and distinguished man, Flavius Marcellinus, Tribune and Notary." The signature of the letter was in the following peculiar style: "Januarianus and other bishops of the Catholic truth, which suffers persecution, but which does not

persecute.” By this description the Donatists uniformly represented their community. They bespoke the fair dealing of the president by saying it was an evident sign of a just moderator when he would not deny to one party what he conceded to the other; and since, said they, he had heard the voluminous papers of their traitors and persecutors, they besought him to kindly receive their epistle; and that he would order it to be placed among the records; and after that, that he would deign to hear their cause. They began their arguments against their opponents with their favorite topic.

The Doctrine of Church Purity

Our adversaries, said they, by discursive testimonies, strongly urge against us the doctrine that it was predicted that the church which was to come was to consist of a mixture of good and bad members to the end of the world. We, on the other hand, said the Donatists, by more valid testimonies, show that the church of the Lord everywhere announced in the divine writings should be holy and pure.

Scripture Quotations on Church Purity

The version in use with the Donatist was probably that of Jerome. This may account for some variations from the English version. I shall endeavor to give a correct version of the Latin text of the Donatist quotations: “Arise, O Zion, says Isaiah, put on thy strength, O Jerusalem, the holy city; there shall not pass through thee the uncircumcised nor the unclean.” “Say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold thy Saviour will come to thee, having his work and his reward before his face, and he will name thee a holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called a desired city, not forsaken.” “Then the eyes of the blind will be opened; the ears of the deaf will hear; the tongue of the dumb will be plain, and the lame will leap as a hart, since water hath broken forth in the desert, and a fountain in a thirsty land.” “And the prophet hath added, A highway will be there, and a holy way it will be called. The unclean will not pass over this way, nor be found in it. No lion will be there. No evil beast will ascend this way, nor dwell there; but the chosen and the redeemed will walk therein.” “In the Song of Songs the Lord hath said of his church, Thou art all fair, my sister; there is nothing reprehensible in thee.” What the apostle also said of the glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and of his having espoused said church to one husband, that he might present it as a chaste virgin to Christ, this people repeated as in full agreement with the church model which they aimed to imitate. **So many and so great, said they, are the testimonies which were announced through the Spirit, concerning the church, in disdain and contempt of the teaching of their opponents, namely, that bad men were to remain among the good in the church.** This, said they, their adversaries improperly maintain from the parable of the tares, when the Lord, by his apostles, has interpreted this very parable to be of a very different import, in the following terms: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is this world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the evil one; the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels,” etceteras. “The field, the Lord says, is the world, therefore not the church, but this world, in which the good and the bad dwell together till the harvest; that is, they are reserved till the divine judgment.”

The Donatists’ Comments on the Teaching of the Parable

This interpretation by the Lord, they asserted, could not be truly gainsaid; since, said they, if the apostles, the companions of the Lord himself, should have learned that the tares, that is, the children of the devil, springing up in the church by the neglect of discipline, were to be left in the communion of the saints, they never would have expelled from the thresholds of their churches, Simon, Erastus, Philetus, Alexander, Demas, Hermogenes, and others like them. Who they meant by the apostate named Erastus I cannot learn. Yes, indeed, said the reforming Donatists, the mixed policy of the Catholics would make void the whole of the public instructions throughout the divine writings pertaining to the separation of the wounded from the sound, the polluted from the clean. On this subject, in all its various forms, and by the numerous persons named, these assiduous men, in more than a folio page of their epistle, very earnestly expatiated. At length they came to what Moses said to the Israelites of Korah and his rebellious company, namely, "Depart ye from the tabernacles of these most obdurate men, and touch nothing of all that pertains to them, lest you perish with them in all their sins." From Isaiah they quote on the same subject, "Depart ye, depart ye; go ye out from those men, be unwilling to touch an unclean thing; depart ye from the midst of them who bear the vessels of the Lord." "Ye are the temple of the living God, saith the apostle, who of himself saith I will dwell in them, and I will walk among them, and I will be their God, and they also shall be my people." "Therefore, saith the apostle, depart ye from the midst of them, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and I will be your father and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Omnipotent."

Of their persecutions this people said they could accuse their adversaries of the savage cruelties with which they themselves, and their ancestors, without ceasing, had pursued with violence, and vexed both them and their fathers, for one hundred years or more. They furthermore asserted that their adversaries were not ashamed to shelter themselves under false arguments against them. Who, said these much injured men, does not know that these, our traitors and persecutors, from the very beginning of their condemned treachery, by all sorts of supplications and devices, have sought our deaths; and contrary to the divine command, by threats and proscriptions, have coerced us to their communion?

References to Distinguished Persecutors

At this time these oppressed people could not fail to speak of the amount of Christian blood which was shed in the wars against them by Leontius, Ursacius, Macarius, Paulus, Taurinus, Romanus, and other executioners, who had obtained favor with secular princes in the deaths of the saints, when very many venerable ministers were killed, others were sent into exile, and the sacred cause of Christianity was harassed far and wide; virgins were violated, the wealthy were proscribed, the poor were spoiled, and ministers who were fleeing from their own churches were taken in their flight. Thus far former times were referred to. In the close of their extended address to their opponents, still in the conference, such was their language: Now, in our own time, said they, our enemies have awarded exiles to our bishops, and precipices to those Christians who were fleeing from them; they have oppressed our people, they have robbed our clergy; they have invaded our churches, and beaten those who were unwilling to leave them. The great slaughter of lives in the Macarian war alone, was also referred to in the description of their persecutions, and although in this war so much blood had been shed, yet, said they, not being satiated, today they are thirsting for more. With a brief and friendly address to the president, this letter of the Donatists was closed. And notwithstanding its great length, it was

evidently composed during the meetings of the conference. This epistle, said the president, will be placed with the acts of the conference. Before this is done, said Emeritus, let testimonies be compared with testimonies, that your sublimity may judge of their respective merits. The discussion of the contents of this letter immediately followed, which was commenced and almost wholly managed by Augustine; but omitting all other subjects, he said: The main question in the epistle was, whether the church which was predicted by the prophets would have a mixture of good and bad members, or whether the members would be altogether good, all holy and unspotted in the world, even in that time, and till the final end of the world. This was Augustine's strong language on this subject. Both these testimonies, said he, are divine, and well agree when rightly understood. On this discussion the parties now engaged in earnest, and also on the parable of the wheat and the tares. O, said he, if you would have patience with me until I can finish my argument. On resuming his discourse, Augustine observed that what he began to say had respect to the divine testimonies of the tares and the wheat. Without repeating the argument, which he went on to finish, it is sufficient to say, it was all embraced in his oft-asserted doctrine that we are to understand that the field means the church instead of the world. In the defense of this position, from which Augustine derived his principal support of lax discipline, in opposition to the strict system of the Donatists, almost a whole folio page was employed; but his unscriptural theory was undermined by his opponents, by the following scripture quotations. I will begin with the quotations by Emeritus:

In the gospel it is said, the world hath not known God; therefore, on the theory in question, the church hath not known God. Again, it is said, That the whole world, that is, the whole church, may become guilty before God. Again, if ye were of the world, it would love its own, but since ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you and despiseth you. Again, they who are of the world, the world heareth them. In concluding their remarks on this very plain subject, What, said Petilian, is here meant by the church and what by the world, is most explicitly defined by the author and maker of this world, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made that was made. The Lord himself hath said the field is the world. Who, therefore, among men, dares to define the world, since the Lord himself, its framer and artificer, hath deigned to define it? At this point the president inquired what was meant by the world that God was reconciling unto himself? Man, said Petilian, is called the world in this case; for it was not beasts but men that God was thus reconciling. In the above details the reader may see the amount of labor of the Donatists in combating the novel exposition of a renowned theologian.

The debates of the parties, so far as they have been preserved, were here closed. A portion of the records of this conference are said to be lost. But what was said by the notaries indicates that they expected the business would be continued. Since the dawn of day, said they to the president, we have filled two books, meaning the waxed tablets on which the records were made, and they requested that the other company of notaries might be called in, to take their places. Elsewhere we learn that this third session of this conference commenced at break of day, and now, after this long day in June, they were operating by torch-light. In this condition the debates of the parties were continued with unabated zeal, especially on the Donatist side. **Soon, however, this protracted meeting, instead of being adjourned to another day, by the order of the president was abruptly closed, and on the spot his judgment was pronounced, which, says Neander, as was to be expected, was in favor of the Catholic church.** The substance of

this judgment will be given in the next chapter. The probable cause of this hasty proceeding of the president will be mentioned when I come to his ignoble death.

Recapitulation of the History of the Conference of Carthage

In no English work have I ever seen any reference to this convocation in which the Donatists were not much concerned, and which imposed upon all their bishops so much of apparently useless labor their long and painful journeys. The council of Nice was held in 325. The conference at Carthage in 411. The differences in the objects and the manner of doing business in these large collections may be represented in the following terms: The whole design at Nice was against the Arians. That of Carthage was against the Donatists. The policy of Nice was openly proclaimed. That of Carthage was studiously concealed. At Nice they had an important question for discussion. At Carthage it was point no point. At Nice they did business on Christian principles. At Carthage they went by a rule of civil law. At Nice all could speak in the council. At Carthage only a few could speak or be in the conference. At Nice they chose their own president. At Carthage he was appointed some months beforehand by an *exparte* emperor. In these convocations there were differences for which neither party was in fault. At Carthage all were Latins. At Nice all were Greeks but Constantine and Arius, from Spain, who were Latins. Arius was the only western delegate to the council of Nice. At the time of the conference the whole of the three days' doings seemed useless; but at this late day its history has supplied important information of the principles of the Donatists, of the number of their churches and bishops, and other matters which can nowhere else be found.

NOTES

1. Col. Cartha. Opta., p. 86.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 8

Various Matters Concerning the Above Named Convocation, its Origin and Chief Manager, With Comments by Different Parties

As Marcellinus was appointed by Honorius, the emperor, not only to collect the men of the conference and preside in it, but to act as judge, in its close we should naturally expect that before he performed this important service he would have recounted the arguments or the parties in their long debates, on both sides. But nothing of the kind was done in this case, and all the complaints of the Donatists of their many and cruel persecutions by their adversaries were passed over in silence, as were also their various and able arguments in defense of their scriptural doctrine of church purity. No reference was made to any of the debates of the conference, but the whole argument for his decision by which the Donatists were condemned was grounded on a very obscure account of the decision of a proconsular tribunal about one hundred years before, when Donatus was condemned and Caecilian was absolved.

The Form of His Judgment

The language of this document was rather that of advice and admonition than of judicial authority. It was addressed not so much to the Donatists themselves as to those who were supposed to be their abettors in their reputed heresy by favoring their measures, or, at least, in permitting them to occupy their premises. The original language of the judge may be given in English in the following terms: All men of rank, likewise the managers of farming estates, the agents and tenants of houses of divine worship, as also of private possessions, and the chief men of all the country, by the authority of the edict of the emperor, I admonish, that so far as they are mindful of the merit and value of the imperial laws, and of their own welfare and reputation, that they strive together to prohibit the conventicles of the Donatists in the cities and all other places. The term "conventicle," in the time of the Donatists, as in later times, according to Webster, was contemptuously applied to the meetings of dissenters from the established church, for religious worship. With all dissenters from established churches, they are quite common in their more early operations. But this people had church edifices all over the land, which had often been taken from them and converted to Catholic use. This was formerly done by violence, which the contriver of this legal process evidently sought to avoid. The president, after his decision against the Donatists, for maturing his main business with them, addressed them in the following manner:

"As the case now stands, the churches which, by my clemency and the command of the emperor, you have been permitted to occupy to the day of this sentence, it behooves you now to hasten without any delay to surrender to the Catholics, unless you choose rather to perish in the snares of so many imperial decrees, which you may certainly shun by consenting to the Catholic union."

The Close of the Judgment

The conference being finished, said Marcellinus, it becomes the bishops of the Donatists, each one, to return to their homes without disgust or dissatisfaction, since it is determined by the legal power that they must either return to the one true church, or give satisfaction to the laws.

Threatening of the Judge

Those, said he, who mingle in their prohibited assemblies again, or return to their profane conventicles, must understand that they cannot escape the judgment of the imperial will. Finally, the judge cautioned the people whom he addressed, against placing any dependence for protection on the Circumcellians. On this subject he evidently spoke under the direction of a clerical adviser. **Such was the display of authority towards the Donatists, as rebels against the established church, of the man who soon after was beheaded by the command of the emperor, under the charge of treason against the state.**

Remarks on the Doings of Marcellinus as the President of the Conference

We have seen that he did not define the punishment of those he condemned; this was not his province, but to make them liable to the punishments enjoined in the existing laws; and a principal complaint of the Donatists against him consisted in his urging upon the authorities the more rigorous execution of these laws. His first and most important object was to gain possession of the Donatist churches for the Catholics, or, in other words, for his own party; and in the next place, to

hold up before the bishops who refused to give up their churches, their liability to punishments of the following kinds: for each bishop a fine of ten pounds weight of gold, twelve ounces to the pound, or exile to the neighboring islands in the Mediterranean. Marcellinus must have been a new hand at presiding, according to more modern custom, since it is said he spoke almost six hundred times during the three days of the conference, that is, on an average about two hundred times per diem. He often spoke but a few words, which might pass for explanations, but quite a number of his speeches were of considerable length. He was compelled, say his advocates, thus often to speak to counteract the deceptive arguments of the Donatists in defending their errors, and to recall them to the subjects of the debate. The partisan character of these speeches all will well understand. In the main, this ex parte president treated with due civility the people who were evidently prejudged, and who were as sure of being condemned at the beginning of the conference as at its close.

Gloomy and Perilous Condition of Almost Three Hundred Bishops, and With Them, Doubtless, Many of Their Brethren of the Lay Order

They had been drawn from their homes against their wills, from the whole region of North Africa, where are now the Barbary States. Here they were in the night season suddenly dismissed, in the midst of their efforts to defend their cause. The judgment was rendered June 26, 411. The tiresome journeys which these much injured men had so lately performed were now to be retraced, generally on foot, the then common mode of travel; and that these men travelled in this way may be inferred from the fact that in many cases they were hindered on the way by sore feet. But amidst all their painful labors in traveling, there was this to console them: although the distances to and from Carthage varied from a small number to a thousand or more miles, they could often find stopping places among their own people, so thickly were they settled all over the country. **Why did they go to the conference at all, may be asked? They had no choice, since by the edict they must go, or forfeit their churches to the Catholics.**

Comments on the Emperor's Edict

This edict, like others of the kind, was doubtless formed under clerical dictation, since we may say of it as Neander said in another case, it was too theological for an emperor. After expatiating quite freely on the reputed faults of the men of depraved minds, and saying that formerly he had commanded that their superstition should be abolished now, by the same authority, he decreed that the surreptitious system should be destroyed. As the emperor, but about a year before, had, by an edict, secured entire freedom to the Donatists for their religion, now, he said, for a worthy cause, the said edict, by the same authority, was annulled. The circumstances under which the edict for the conference was granted, the emperor himself has thus described; it confirms what was lately said by the Donatists: A legation of venerable bishops, who, he says, he freely admitted, earnestly desired that the Donatist bishops should be collected with those of the Catholics for the manifest intention of refuting their superstition by disputations. Then a long list of directions is given for collecting the bishops and for the management of the conference. Friar Baldwin was one of the few Catholics who could see both sides of a controversy, and occasionally he noticed mistakes of his own party; he was against dragging religious disputes before secular tribunals; and he said it was more becoming Christian bishops to take the prophets and apostles for their guides. The Friar had little faith in the benefit to the Catholics in the Carthaginian conference which was so often on the lips of

Augustine; and he criticized with his usual freedom the argument of his favorite bishop for compelling the Donatists to attend that conference, and then refusing to attend a similar meeting of a general character of the Pelagian, not long after. The argument to which the Friar objected was stated by Augustine himself, namely: "To crush the immodesty and to curb the audacity of the men whose madness had so overrun all Africa that the Catholic truth could not be preached in many places." The Friar compared the dispute of Augustine with the Donatists, with the more subtle and important one of Basil with the heretic Photinus. In this case, said the Friar, Photinus denied the head of the church, that is, Christ himself; whereas the Donatists only denied the church. Again, said the Friar, the dispute in question with Augustine was mixed with the ordination of Caecilian by Felix. Again, said the same author, I believe that the emperor Honorius was willing his friend Marcellinus should be protected with an armed force in the conference. The reason for such an unusual measure for a professedly religious meeting, composed altogether of Christian bishops, was devised from the slanderous reports of the bad character of the Donatists. The Friar, in the course of his comments on the positions of the Donatists, observed that they claimed to be Catholics themselves, and that they were bishops of a Catholic church, and defenders of the truth. Here, said the Friar, came up a question of fact rather than of law, which was the more difficult to solve, because the Donatists appeared to retain the Catholic Doctrine of faith, neither had they been accused of apostasy of any kind.

The Friar Sides with the Donatists Against Augustine in History

The Donatists, said he, were right in saying that Elijah and Elisha never communicated with the altars of Samaria; and I wonder, said he, at the answer of Augustine to the contrary of their assertion. Again, said the Friar, Augustine was wrong and the Donatists were right in what they said of the prophets Hosea and Amos, respecting their not communing with the Israelites. The Friar made special mention of their defense of church purity against the lax system of the Catholics. While on this subject he repeated the famous passage in Isaiah, so often refereed to by the Donatists: "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from the midst of them; be ye clean who bear the vessels of the Lord." Interspersed in what was said by the Friar on the controversies between the Catholics and the Donatists we often find a repetition of the following pertinent questions of the reformers: What has the emperor to do with the church? What have bishops to do at the palace? What has Christianity to do with the kings of this world? I confess, said the Friar, that Augustine was more nervous and explicit in his writings against Petilian than in his speaking in the conference; because, said he, in writing, no one interrupted him, as they did when speaking. Rather a lame apology for such a controversialist as was the bishop of Hippo.

Augustine's Abridgment of the Conference at Carthage

The author of this professedly friendly and religious, but in part political and sectarian measure, published two articles of considerable length respecting it; the first was an abridgment of the original records; the second an address to the Donatists after the conference. Both articles are found in Augustine's works. The abridgment was designed for those readers who would not be inclined to examine the multitudinous details of the original records. It is also a paraphrase of those records, of a decidedly sectarian character, in which facts are often distorted to favor his own side.

The Address After the Conference

Why, O ye Donatists, said this unwearied adversary, are you still seduced by your bishops, whose dark fallacies have been dispelled by the clearness of the light, whose error has been made apparent, and whose obstinacy has been overcome? Why do you give credit to your conquered bishops, when they say the judge was corrupted with a bribe? In continuing his address to his opponents, Augustine crossed his path by representing them as shut up in a prison by the judgment against them; but soon after he addressed them in the following terms: Behold, the conference has been held and the disputations of the parties have been had. Behold, your falsehood has been proved. Why now do you shun the Catholic union? Why is our charity still despised? Why are we still in different parties and under different names? One God hath created us. One Christ hath redeemed us, and one Holy Spirit ought to unite us. In reply to the comments of the Donatists of being judged in the night, cannot, said he, the truth be spoken in the night? Paul once preached till midnight. The Psalmist hath said the Lord hath commanded his loving kindness by day and declared it by night. Now, said he, let the name of the Lord be honored; and now let your brethren see how good and how pleasant it will be to rejoice with you in Christian union. Now at length let the devil be conquered in your hearts.

NOTES

1. Recte Donatistae aiunt Eliam et Elisaeum, etc. Recte rursus ** Osea et Amos, etc. Col. Cartha. Opta., p. 131.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 9

The Catholic Discipline Compared With That of the Donatists

As one of the principal differences between Augustine and the Donatists had respect to this subject, as readers may have observed in the foregoing narratives, especially in the close of Chapter VII, that all may judge whether this people had valid reasons for their leaving the Catholics, I will describe their discipline according to their own writings in Bingham's Antiquities: "As to the practice of the Catholic church in Africa," says Bingham, "Augustine freely owns he was forced many times to tolerate the tares among the wheat, when they were grown numerous, and it was dangerous to eradicate them by the rough measures of severe discipline, for fear of overturning and destroying the church unity by dangerous schisms, and of scandalizing more weak souls in that way than they could hope to gain by the other." It was so in Cyprian's time, he says, and it was so in his own. He often repeats that famous passage of Cyprian, in his book De Lapsis, concerning the fallen, where, speaking of the reason of God's visiting the church with the terrible persecution under Decius, he plainly intimates that members, both of the clergy and the laity, had so corrupted their morals that good men could do nothing more than mourn and keep themselves as well as they could from partaking of their sins.

The Famous Passage of Cyprian

All men's minds were set upon augmenting their estates, and forgetting what the first Christians did in the times of the apostles, and what they ought always to do, they, by an insatiable ardor of covetousness, only studied to increase their fortunes. There was no true religion or devotion in the priests; no sincere faith in the ministers; no mercy in their works; no discipline in their morals. Many bishops who ought to have been both monitors and examples to the rest, forsook their divine calling and rambled about other provinces, seeking such business as would bring them gain and advantage. In the meantime they suffered the poor of the church to starve, whilst they minded nothing but the heaping up of riches and the getting of estates by fraud and violence, by usury and extortion. Cyprian, says Bingham, here plainly intimates that in such a corrupt state of affairs the discipline of the church could not be maintained or be rightly put in execution. But he was forced to endure those colleagues of his who were covetous, rapacious, extortioners, deserters, fraudulent and cruel. This mode of reasoning, says Bingham, was very often employed by Augustine in his disputes with the Donatists when he maintained that the church in his day followed the example of Cyprian in this matter. When, said he, we are not permitted to excommunicate offenders for the sake of the peace and tranquillity of the church, we do not therefore neglect said church, but only tolerate what we would not, to obtain what we would, have. In his book against Parmenian, Augustine treats this subject at large. Who can blame the Donatists for separating from such a church?

The Rebaptizing System of Cyprian, and the Use Made of It by the Donatists for Rebaptizing

We come now to a strange event in Catholic history, which for some time produced no little disturbance in a large portion of the Catholic church. In the business now to be briefly described, the Donatists took no part, only in their comments on the new practice of rebaptizing by their opponents, who, by Cyprian's rule, baptized heretics anew for the same reason that they rebaptized Catholics, to wit, the reputed invalidity of the first baptism.

Cyprian's Council for rebaptizing Heretics

By this distinguished bishop of the metropolitan church of Carthage, the council under consideration was collected near the close of his life. As rebaptizing was contrary to Catholic custom both then and now,[1] a violent dispute arose on the subject between Cyprian of Carthage, and Stephen, then bishop of Rome. Each in that age was of equal episcopal power, in the respective locations. The council under consideration was held at Carthage in 256. It consisted of upwards of eighty bishops. The only business of this convocation appears to have been to decide the question of the rebaptizing of the heretics who came into the church, on the principle that their first baptism was null and void; or whether it should be held as valid, if administered in due form, in the name of the Trinity. **As immersion was then the practice of all parties, whether heretic or orthodox, there was no dispute on the mode of baptism, nor the subjects of the rite, especially in the controversy now under review.** The whole council was evidently pledged to sustain their leader in his anabaptistical enterprise. They all spoke more or less on the subject, but in most cases their speeches were quite brief. The following may serve as specimens. The reader may notice that the speakers were all careful to make of no account the former baptism of heretics:

“I,” said one, “believe that every man who comes into the church from the heretics is to be baptized.”

“They who approve of the baptism of heretics make the baptism of the church void.”

“The baptism of heretics and schismatics is false.”

“If the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch together; and so if a heretic baptizes a heretic, they together fall into death. He who is baptized for the dead, what doth his washing profit him? The same question may be asked respecting those who are ‘ab haereticis tinguuntur,’ baptized by heretics.”

“If the church omits the baptism of heretics because they are said to be already baptized, then the heretics stand first with the orthodox.”

“Christ instituted the church, the devil heresy. Can a synagogue of Satan have the baptism of Christ?”

“Since a true baptism can be administered only in the Catholic church, it is manifest that none can be truly baptized outside of the boundaries of that church; therefore all who have been ‘tinctos’, baptized, in heresy or schism, when they come into the church, in my judgment, ought to be baptized.”

“There is but one baptism, which is by the church; where there is no true church there can be no valid baptism.”

“It is written, there is one God, one Christ, one church, and one baptism. How can any one be baptized in a place where God, and Christ, and a church are not?”

“A man who is a heretic cannot give what he has not; much more may this be said of a schismatic, who has lost what he had.”

“Without cause, indeed falsely and invidiously, they impugn the truth, that may presume to say we rebaptize heretics, when the church does not rebaptize, but she baptizes them.”

I have endeavored to give a literal version of what was said by the above speakers. The sameness of their remarks in some cases may be accounted for from their appearing to speak without much preparation. The speech of Cyprian to his council, of about two folio pages, I shall wholly omit. I have thus given to the reader more or less of the speeches or remarks of about one-eighth of the members of Cyprian’s council, on what, in the language in which they spoke, was termed “rebaptizationes”, in English re-baptisms. Of these fourscore speakers, not one but the last referred to, ever used the term “re” in connection with baptism; and it is somewhat amusing to see how carefully they all avoided it. This practice, it is said, prevailed somewhat extensively, and caused much trouble among the Catholics in Africa and the east, after Cyprian’s death by martyrdom, two years after this council, that is in 258.

Remarks on the Details of the Foregoing Narratives

In this baptismal controversy immersionists may derive a valid argument from the fact that the numerous speakers in Cyprian’s council almost uniformly, in their

references to baptism, employed the verb “baptiso”, and the nouns “baptisma” and “baptismus”, when it is certain that immersion was the ordinary mode of baptism with all parties, whether Catholics or dissenters. The other terms, which were seldom used by these speakers, were “tingo” and “lavo”. Augustine complained of the Donatists for so often reminding him of Cyprian’s rebaptizing policy. Why, said he, do you assume Cyprian’s authority for your schism? No longer, said he, quote Cyprian’s writings and council for the repetition of baptism, but rather follow Cyprian’s example for the preservation of Christian union, by remaining in the church.

Divisions Among the Donatists

This numerous and widespread community, in its progress, divided into parties, like the English Puritans, which appellation, as a term of reproach, was often applied to them. The **Maximianists** was the first of these divisions. This party, according to Augustine and Du Pin, arose in the following manner: A deacon of the Donatist church of Carthage in some way offended Primian, then the pastor of said church, and in the end was excommunicated; and under his management the new party was formed, which took its name from that of the deacon, its founder, which was Maximianus. But whatever names the new parties took, they all bore the general name of Donatists. This was the only party which went out from the original company, which, according to both Augustine and Du Pin, through their whole history, was the main body of this people. This first division began with twelve bishops, but it soon increased to one hundred; but it is doubtful if it held its own, as we read of some coming back to the main body. Of the cause of the first division I can only learn by Du Pin, that it was something about baptism. More is said on this subject by Du Pin in his historical sketches of the Donatists. As I shall refer with emphasis on the important position and services of the main body of this people in the chapter on their denominational character, compared with the minor parties, I will now only refer to the small division from the Maximianists. The **Rogatians** were so called from Rogatus of the province of Mauritania. As in the time of the Donatists there were two provinces in North Africa of this name, which together constituted a large part of the country, and in them the Donatists appear to have been numerous, why the bishop whose name indicates a Roman pedigree was specially referred to as a native of the province, I do not understand. On what point Rogatus differed from the party from which he separated I am not informed.

Augustine’s Letters to Different Donatists and to Catholic Statesmen Concerning this People

Macrobius was a Donatist bishop in the city of Hippo, in which this people were quite numerous, and in which Augustine had very lately been ordained a Catholic bishop, and being full of zeal for his party, as Macrobius was about to baptize a Catholic sub-deacon for the purpose of making him a deacon with the Donatists, Augustine, in two epistles, entreated his beloved brother in the Lord, not to take from his people one of their sub-deacons. One of these epistles occupies five folio pages.

To Maximinus, also a Donatist bishop, Augustine sent an epistle of considerable length to hinder him from rebaptizing a Catholic deacon. He had previously sent him an epistle of more limited contents, on the same subject. It was to this Donatist bishop, Maximinus, and in one of these epistles, that Augustine proposed a compromise with the Donatists by which they and the Catholics

should cease reproaching each other of their reputed bad men on each side. This account will be given in remarks on the Circumcellions. By Augustine, Crispin was warned of his danger of the fine of ten pounds of gold, according to the Theodosian code, for rebaptizing about forty Catholics. This baptism, like all others of those times, according to the Latin note, was by immersion. Crispin's case will be more fully noticed in connection with Du Pin's History of the Donatists. Severus, a kinsman of Augustine, was importuned by him to desert the wicked and impudent Donatists. To Donatus, a Donatist presbyter, Augustine sent an epistle of a peculiar character, in which he said if he could witness his solicitude for his salvation he would, perhaps, have pity on his soul. You, said he, maintain that no one ought to be coerced, even to that which is good, because God has given a free will to man. Donatus was a very common name with the Roman descendants in Africa. Du Pin has a list of almost thirty on both sides, in the conference at Carthage, in his Monumenta. To Donatus, a proconsul, and Festus, a magistrate in Africa, Augustine gave instructions respecting the amount of punishment they should inflict on the Donatists. Marcellinus, who became the president and judge in the Carthaginian conference, was a very frequent and confidential correspondent of Augustine, to whom he gave instructions how to arrange the manner of conducting that iniquitous meeting. But to the old warrior, Boniface, Augustine sent his largest treatise about punishing the Donatists, not so much for heresy, as he admitted to the count that they had nothing in common with the Arians, but for their impious dissension from the Catholic church. This epistle was of fifteen folio pages. The count was cautioned to spare the lives of the offenders. In the latter part of the ninth volume of Augustine's works we find a list of small works by him, consisting of letters, sermons and tracts, to the number of about one hundred, addressed directly to the Donatists or to Catholics of almost all classes of the clergy and the laity, respecting them. From such a variety of efforts to oppose the prevalence of this enterprising people, the reader may form an opinion of their number and their influence. In the celebrated council of Nice we do not find any of the Donatists. One of the Novatian bishops was invited to attend it by Constantine, but neither he, nor any dissenter, met with the Nicene Fathers.

Comparison of the Novatians and the Donatists

The Novatians arose about half a century earlier than the Donatists. The first party had its origin in Rome; the other in Carthage. While the Donatist party had their principal seat in Africa, the Novatians spread extensively in almost all parts of the Roman empire into which Christianity had spread. Each of these communities became quite numerous, and were distinguished for their evangelical principles; the one in their fixed location in Africa, the other as missionaries in widespread regions.

Wherein Did These People Differ?

I cannot find any material difference between them but in that part of their church discipline which had respect to excommunicated members. While the Donatists readmitted them on evidence of repentance, under no circumstances would this be done by the Novatians. As this party arose while the Catholics had much trouble in their church with apostates in the Decian persecution, this might have had an influence in the adoption of their severe discipline. Both the Donatists and the Novatians rebaptized those who came to them from the Catholics. They were also equally reproached as Puritans, because it was said they pretended they were more religious than their neighbors. And, different from the established church,

they held that the visible church of Jesus Christ does not, and ought not to, consist of any but sound members, who were not contaminated with spots and falls.

In this early age the Catholics adopted the absurd custom of freeing themselves from all blame in the punishing of those they condemned by throwing it on the secular powers. This mode of reasoning was well exposed in the Spanish Cortes by the eloquent Castellar in reply to what was said on this subject by father Manterola in the same Cortes. The venerable Manterola says that he condemns all religious persecutions. We do not put the persecuted ones to death, says he; it is the civil power that executes them. Ingenious defence! It is exactly as the assassin said, It is not I who killed this victim, it was my sword. But do not all know as well as I, said Castellar, that the inquisition was the sword of the church? Optatus did not appear well pleased with the persecutions of Macarius, which he admitted were very severe on the Donatists in the Macarian war, yet, said he, in all the scenes of that bloody war, nothing was done by our desire, nothing by our counsel, nothing by our knowledge, nothing by our assistance. All this was said in the face of the well known facts, that the emperor Constans, a zealous Catholic, sent count Macarius into Africa to fight the Donatists into the Catholic union, and that the count himself was a member of the Catholic church.

NOTES

1. I inquired of a Catholic pastor if this ancient custom of not requiring re-baptism still prevailed in his church. He said it did. But, said he, to avoid any mistake, we say, "If thou hast not been baptized, I baptize thee," etc.
2. Et de tinguentibus loquitur.
3. Ubi mergeret homines in profundum. Op. August., Tome 9, p. 228.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 10

Biographical Sketches of Donatist Authors and Distinguished Men

Almost all the facts under this head of a biographical character have been selected from the works of Augustine, in his controversial writings against the Donatists. A few of these facts, which are under the head of fragments of Donatist history, are from the works of Optatus. Of but few of the men whose names appear in the details of this work can I find materials for this article, as no information is recorded of their early lives, nor connected accounts of them on the stage of action. Of **DONATUS** himself, who gave name to this people, all that is said at first is, that he was one of the seventy Numidian bishops who engaged in the measures out of which the Donatists arose; that his place at home was Casae Nigrae, which, according to Perry's translation, meant the "Black house" and that he published many books pertaining to his heresy.

SECUNDUS, another of these seventy bishops, was the primate of Numidia, which name answers to that of archbishop with the Catholics in later times; by him all new bishops of the province were ordained. This is all we have of the early history of this distinguished man as a Catholic, and such were the whole seventy bishops when they went to Carthage; and we find but little more of Secundus as a Donatist, except that he is said to have been the president of the council which deposed Caecilian and ordained Majorinus, of whom we have no information except that he was a deacon of the Catholic church of Carthage, in which, by the new party, he was suddenly advanced to the episcopal chair.

Of **PARMENIAN**, one of the able defenders of the Donatist cause whose writings have been preserved, there is almost an entire absence of facts pertaining to his early history and of his subsequent labors among his people.

The same may be said of **CRESCONIUS**, the grammarian, the very learned and able defender of his persecuted brethren, who wrote about half a century after Parmenian, and others of whose writings we have less information.

Different from my anticipations, my proposed biographical sketches must be confined to Petilian, Emeritus and Gaudentius, and a few of less note.

PETILIAN

Of his native place we are not informed. It is said he was born of Catholic parents, that he was a Catholic catechumen until he became a Donatist, at which time he was a forensic advocate. The strange account of the manner in which a full grown man, in the execution of a civil office, was taken from the Catholics by the Donatists, is related by Augustine in the following terms: "When," said he, "the Donatists were predominant in Constantina, (the ancient Cirta) they seized with violence Petilian, our catechumen; when he fled away they sought him in his flight; they found him concealed; they drew him out fearing; they baptized him trembling, and they ordained him against his will." "Behold", said Augustine, "what violence they used against a member of our church. And while they snatch men to death, do not we draw them to salvation?"

This story was told as a veritable fact in Augustine's sermon for the conversion of Emeritus, which event will soon come under review. Such is the absurdity of this story that it requires no neutralizing comments. It was told to a large Catholic audience, by whom it was doubtless believed as were other fabulous accounts, which were designed to operate against the reformers. That Petilian was originally a Catholic is not improbable. He first appears in the history of the Donatists as the bishop of a large church of this people in the city of Constantina, then the capital of Numidia, in which place much has been said of him in our former narratives, as there also has been in the details of the conference at Carthage, where he and Augustine were the principal speakers on their own sides. The most of the able writings of Petilian which have been preserved may be found in the extracts from these writings in Chapter IV, against Augustine. These two prominent men in their parties were of about the same age, and through most of their lives they were in conflict with each other, which began about a century after the rise of the Donatists. Through the whole of the debates of the Carthaginian convocation they met each other face to face, and it was after this meeting that Augustine gave the above account of the forcible conversion of his brother Petilian, as he usually called him, to the party which through all his life he so ably defended. His ability as a writer is shown in his exposition of the principles of his own community, and

in all that pertained to the church and state system, the coercive measures, and the lax discipline of the Catholics. It was stated above that Petilian and his life-long opponent were about of the same age. Augustine, at the time of the conference, was 57. In that meeting, the term most venerable [2] was applied to Petilian by his opponents. About ten years later we find him in a council of thirty Donatist bishops in consultation about their denominational concerns. The abundant labors and the great influence of Petilian among the Donatists appear in their history during his time.

EMERITUS

This eminent bishop was of the seven debaters in the conference, where he was very active, and, according to Augustine himself, was an able defender of the Donatist cause. We also find his name often mentioned in all the controversies of his people with their opponents, but I do not find any account of his early life, or of the circumstances connected with it. After he was somewhat advanced in years he was exposed to a vexatious assault, which I have deemed worthy of being briefly described. He was the pastor of a large Donatist church in the city of Caesarea, in the province of Mauritania, where he appears to have continued for seven years after the conference; at the close of which, this church, with all others of the Donatists, by the decision of the judge, would be lost to them unless they consented to the Catholic union. At the period under review, which was in the year 418, Emeritus, in the midst of his peaceful pursuits, was beset by Augustine, not for his church but for himself, as a convert to his own faith, as by a false rumor he had heard that his brother Emeritus was about ready to go over to the Catholics. Acting upon this rumor, the zealous bishop engaged in laborious efforts for maturing such a desirable event. The whole story as related by himself occupies about eight folio pages. In it was a sermon professedly for the purpose; an account of a meeting in a church full of Catholics, and many speeches and remarks by the projector of the measure, which he thus described. Sometime after the conference at Carthage, there arose a necessity of his going to Caesarea, where Emeritus, as yet, was the bishop of the Donatists. The distance, according to Butler's atlas, was a few hundred miles. As this was the home of his brother Emeritus, for whom he expressed a most ardent affection, after mutual salutations, by Augustine's persuasions he went with him into the metropolitan church of the Catholics, and having thus freely entered it, "we thought," said he, "he would not refuse the Catholic communion." Thus suddenly the unsuspecting Donatist bishop found himself the observed of a crowd of observers, who evidently had collected to witness his profession of the Catholic faith; instead of which, the report soon went out that he was still in heretical perverseness. What was said in the church by Augustine and his coadjutors fills a number of folio pages, while Emeritus was almost wholly silent. Augustine now went back to their debates in their conference seven years before, and challenged the claim of Emeritus of being then victorious. To this he replied, "the records will decide that question." The exparte character of the conference, in the view of the Donatists, by the concessions of Augustine, was thus referred to: "I know," said he, "you maintained that the president was under a bribe, and that we bought his judgment against you. I know," said he, "what you said of the judge being of our communion, and for that reason you opposed him without restraint. I know that you gave out that you were put down by power, not by the truth. All these things," said Augustine to his brother Emeritus, "were thrown abroad by you or those of your communion after the conference; but since you have well known that victorious truth is against you, why do you still shun the Catholic union?"

We are near the close of this singular measure, when the proselyting bishop changed his style of addressing his brother Emeritus. "Since you still shun the Catholic union, why have you come here?" said the disappointed bishop. "I came at your request," said the resolute Emeritus. "You came only to deceive us," said the uncivil Augustine. Augustine lived about ten years after this event, but, probably, he never heard the last of it from the Donatist party.

GAUDENTIUS

This able defender of the Donatists, and their distinguished sentiments, was also one of the seven speakers on their side in the conference at Carthage, and although he and his church were exposed to the same judgment of the president as Emeritus, yet we find him at his post nine years after said judgment was pronounced. Some extracts from the very able writings of Gaudentius may be found in Chapter IV. Some brief sketches of his history will now be given. I find no account of his early life or of his writings except the portions which are found in the works of his decided adversary, Augustine. He was the pastor or bishop, as all pastors were then called, of an important church, and his defence of their cherished sanctuary, and the circumstances of that defence, embrace the substance of the information I have obtained of this much persecuted man. In the year 420, that is, nine years after the far-famed conference, Dulcitius, a military tribune, was sent into Africa to gain possession of Donatist churches, of which that of Gaudentius was early sought. Preparatory to this undertaking the tribune addressed epistles to Gaudentius, and also to Augustine; the first to give due notice of his mission, the other for advice respecting it. Augustine advised the tribune to proceed with severe measures, since, said he, it is better that some should suffer by their own fires than that the whole body should suffer in the everlasting flames of gehenna. This cruel advice was not at all followed by the tribune, but he opened a friendly correspondence with Gaudentius about the church in question, in which two letters passed between the parties. Some of their contents will be disclosed in what will appear in our remarks on this subject. In this case we have a rare instance of condescension of a high state officer in his dealing with a reputed violator of state laws. The letter of Dulcitius to Gaudentius, and his to the imperial commissioner, were all reviewed in a quite lengthy treatise by Augustine, from the contents of which it is evident the persecuting church manager was much annoyed with the different turn of this business from that he advised; especially with the mild language of the tribune in addressing Gaudentius, and in his recognizing the religious character of the tribune. Augustine's Remarks on this singular transaction. In the first place, said he, we do not undertake to defend the language of the tribune, but our aim is to refute the heretics. What though a layman of the military order of our communion has been too incautious in addressing Gaudentius, who of us cannot overlook his fault? Who of us will prejudge the words of the tribune? Augustine being unwilling to have anything reported in favor of Gaudentius by the tribune, said he did not read in his letters concerning him, that he was a man of prudence and innocence, but that he had heard this from others. Again, said Augustine, the tribune being a military man, he was not well acquainted with the proprieties of language for his mission. But far be it from me, said the objecting adversary, that I should insinuate that Gaudentius was deceived by flattery. As the tribune was on the spot, and knew all that passed, Augustine was in a rather critical position. Behold, said he, this tribune Dulcitius, who is of our communion. Nevertheless, said he to Gaudentius, according to your testimony he is not superstitious, but sincerely religious; and according to your exposition, he is not a false, but a true worshiper of God. If, therefore, thou hast an entire affection for the tribune, wherefore dost thou

contemptuously refuse to hold with him the unity of Christ? And by rendering evil as it were for evil, dost thou not long to rebaptize him whom thou dost account thy persecutor?

Gaudentius closed both his epistles to the tribune by wishing him prosperity in the administration of the affairs of the republic, and that he might retire from the causing of disquietude to a Christian people. We can do the same, said Augustine, but we do not desire the tribune to cease from the correction of heretics. In one of the epistles of Gaudentius to the tribune he said: You persuade me to flee from my post to avoid the demands of the laws. Hear, said he, what the Lord said of the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, and what of the hireling who, by fleeing, left the sheep a prey to the wolf. The fleeing policy was highly commended by Augustine, on which he made extensive comments, quoting the example of Paul at Damascus, and what Christ said of fleeing from one city to another. As he greatly desired the peaceable possession of the Donatist churches for his own people, it is easy to comprehend the reason of the wily manager in this case.

The Charge of Threatened Suicide by Gaudentius, by Augustine

In his correspondence with Dulcitius, he was requested to surrender his church to the Catholics. In reply to this request the resolute bishop addressed the tribune in these terms: "In this church, in which the name of God and his Christ is always invoked in truth, as you yourself also have admitted, we will permanently remain as long as it may please God for us to live." This is the whole of the threatened suicide of Gaudentius. The story which has gone the rounds of church history originated in the perverted language of Augustine. "You," said he to Gaudentius, "declared, with other words, I grant, that you would burn your church, with yourself and people in it."

FULGENTIUS

The most I can learn of this Donatist author is found in a small work which he published against the Catholics, in defense of his own people. In this work are many scripture quotations, mostly from the evangelical prophets, who described the church of the coming Messiah, and who foretold that this church should consist of a separate and holy people. He maintained, with the decision of his party, that believers were the only subjects of Christian baptism. **He was also very severe on the persecutions of the Catholics, and on their lax and corrupt discipline.**

VICENTIUS

He was the only author among the dissenting parties from the main body of the Donatists of whose writings I have gained any information. To him Augustine addressed an epistle of great length, from which the following extracts are made: You, said Augustine, think that none are to be compelled to the gospel. Did not the Master say, compel them to come in--to the feast? In defence of retaliation of injuries Augustine addressed Vicentius in the following terms: Pharaoh oppressed the people of God with hard labor. Moses afflicted impious Pharaoh's people with severe chastisements. Jezebel killed the Lord's prophets. Elias killed the prophets of Baal. The Jews scourged Christ. Christ scourged the Jews. The impious killed the prophets. The prophets killed the impious. Men delivered the apostles into the

hands of the civil magistrates. The apostles delivered men into the power of Satan.

No example can be found, said Vicentius, in the gospels or in the apostolic writings, that anything whatever was ever sought from earthly rulers for the church against their enemies. This fact was admitted by Augustine, but he said it was to be the result of prophecies not yet fulfilled. It was to Vicentius that the bishop of Hippo gave the memorable description of his conversion of the Donatist, not by arguments, but in the manner soon to be described. This account was given in reply to the arguments of Vicentius against compulsion in religious concerns. The then persecuting church manager [Augustine] admitted to Vicentius that at first he was of the same mind with him, and was against forcing men into the church lest it should be filled with false Catholics, and that his mind was changed by the arguments of older men who referred to the effect of coercive measures in favor of the Catholics, and also by his own experience in church management, which he thus defined: **“When I first came to Hippo, I found the city full of the Donatist party, who were all opposed to me, but they were converted to the Catholic union by the fear of the imperial laws.”** How decidedly is this statement opposed to the common theory of historians that the Donatists were converted to the Catholics by the logical powers of Augustine, a power, says Robins, he himself did not claim, although he was never backward in sounding his own praise. Vicentius belonged to the Rogatians, but he appears to have been a firm supporter of the primordial principles of the original Donatists.

Fragments of the History of Donatist Martyrs in Africa, Datinus, Saturnus, Felix Amplus and Others

These fragments are found in the works of Optatus, and are said to have been written by an unknown Donatist, who said the Catholic editor displayed the impudence of his sect in his calumnies of Mensurius and Caecilian. The censures of these men consisted in their cruelty to the martyrs in prison in the Diocletian war, in leaving them without food, and hindering others from supplying them. This complaint is related in detail by Mosheim: “Who,” says this writer, “who is instructed in the knowledge of the divine law, is endued with faith, is eminent in devotion, holy in religion, and is mindful of God his judge, cannot discern truth from error, separate perfidy from faith, show the difference of a false from a well grounded holiness, distinguish between the standing and the fallen, the wounded and the whole, the criminal from the just, the condemned and the innocent, the betrayer from the keeper of the law, the denier from the confessor of the name of Christ, the persecutor from the martyr of the Lord; and can he esteem as one and the same, a church of martyrs, and the conventicles of traitors? No one, verily; since they are as contrary, and opposed to each other, as light to darkness, life to death, a holy angel to a devil, Christ to antichrist.”

The Character of the True Church according to the Unknown Donatist Author

It is holy, united and truly Catholic; from this church have proceeded the martyrs by whom the divine testimonies have been preserved. This church alone hath defeated the hostile assaults of its foes, to the effusion of blood, and hath rescued the law of the Lord. In this church the aids of the Holy Spirit are continually present; baptism from the Savior’s example is performed, and a divine life is perpetually renewed; for God is always propitious to his own people. The Lord

Christ takes delight in his own church; the Holy Spirit, as a conqueror, rejoices among the confessors, and is triumphant among the martyrs.

The Closing Scenes with the Martyrs

At last, worn out with an atrocious famine, these blessed martyrs, by degrees, day after day, departed to the celestial realms, with the palm of martyrdom, to our Lord Jesus, who, with the Father, in endless ages reigns. Amen.

NOTES

1. Pars Donati * * Petilianum scrutatus est fugientem invenit latentem, extraxit paventem, baptizavit trementem, ordinavit nolentem--S. Augustine Sermon, p. 624.
2. Vir grandissimus.
3. Op. August., Tome 9, p. 638.
4. In hoc autem ecclesia inquit, in qua nomen Dei et Christi Ejus, ut etiam ipse dixisti, in veritate semper est frequentum, nos ant vivi quamdia Deo placuerit permanemus, etc. Op. Aug., Tome 9, p. 637.
5. Nam primo mihi opponebatur civitas mea, quae cum tota esset in parte Donati, ad unitatem catholicam tirnore legum imperialium conversaest. Op. Aug., Tome 21, p. 237
6. Op. Opta. Fragment Dona. Hist., p. 103. "Ad sidera regna cum palma martyrii migraverunt, praestante Domino nostro Jesu qui cum Patre requat in saecula saeculorum, Amen.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 11

Denominational Character of the Donatists

In the first place, although from the earliest times the foulest stigmas have rested on this people, when their true character is developed they may well compare with any evangelical people of this or of any age or denomination, so far as their morals and evangelical principles were concerned, all that has been published of them to the contrary notwithstanding. My position as to the discussion of the question of the denominational affinities of the Donatists when I engaged in their history, is stated in the early part of this work, where may also be seen the description of the unexpected development of facts which induced me to forego my non-committal position, so far as the baptistical affinities of this people were concerned. According to my knowledge, the Episcopalians and the Baptists are the only communities who have claimed the Donatists as denominational kindred. The Episcopal claim on the score of the Donatist diocese will be examined in treating of the nature of the early dioceses at large. To the ordinary Baptist claim of agreement in baptism, and other matters of faith and practice, we now may add the rejection of infant baptism. In this stage of this discussion it may be proper to

notify the reader that not only the Donatists, but all others then, whether Catholics or dissenters, practiced immersion in baptism; and the practice also was prevalent with all parties of requiring faith before baptism. Augustine is the only exception I find in all the writings now under review. The early subjects of baptism will soon be described. The trinity and the believer were two essential things with Optatus for a valid baptism.

No Infant Baptism in Primitive Times, Says Neander

“Baptism,” says he, “was administered at first only to adults, as men were accustomed to conceive baptism and faith as strictly connected. We have all reason for not deriving infant baptism from apostolical institution, and the recognition of it which followed somewhat later as an apostolical tradition serves to confirm this hypothesis. **In the last years of the second century, Tertullian appears as a zealous opponent of infant baptism, a proof that the practice had not as yet come to be regarded as an apostolical institution;** for otherwise, he would hardly have ventured to express himself so strongly against it. But if the necessity of infant baptism was acknowledged in theory, it was still far from being uniformly recognized in practice. As the church of North Africa was the first to bring prominently into notice the necessity of infant baptism, so, in connection with this, they also introduced the communion of infants.”

In the above quotations we have a general, and doubtless a correct, view of infant baptism in the early ages, as they are from one of the best church historians, who was himself very intimately connected with the system, being a member of the Lutheran church, the largest body of Protestant pedobaptists. But we should bear in mind that it is quite common for German theologians, both the orthodox and the liberals, to reject the doctrine of the apostolical origin of infant baptism.

Various Matters Pertaining to Infant Baptism, from the Writings of Augustine Against the Donatists

The best historians trace the first baptism of infants to Africa. We have seen above that Tertullian of Carthage was the first who opposed the practice. Nothing is said of it among the Donatists for almost a century from their origin, pro or con, when we read that Augustine, in his controversy with the Donatists on baptism, published some books concerning the baptism of little ones.

Augustine’s Description of Infant Baptism in His Time

The universal church, said he, holds that when little infants are baptized, who certainly, not yet, can believe with the heart unto righteousness, and with the mouth make confession unto salvation, but otherwise, by weeping and squalling even when the baptismal mystery is solemnly performed for them, they drown the mystic words themselves; nevertheless, no Christian would vainly say they were not truly baptized.

At that time there was a greater reason for the weeping and squalling of infants in their baptism than at present, except among the Greeks, by whom they are always immersed; since, according to Du Pin, it is certain that in the time of Augustine, in the administration of baptism, all, both infants and adults, were three times dipped in water.

Defence of Infant Baptism by Augustine

“That which the universal church holds, which was not instituted by councils but has always been retained, it is most rightly believed was not transmitted save only by apostolical authority.” His famous defence was made for any one who might seek for divine authority for infant baptism, in a treatise of the author against the Donatists. This fact gives this article significance as to the sentiments of this people on the subject of the infant rite of baptism in an objective form. This defence is put in small capitals in the original. This might have been done by the author, or his editors at a later period after the document became of so much importance with pedobaptists. Since writing the above I have found in Du Pin’s *Monuments of the Donatists* that the treatise in question on baptism was formed according to the promise of Augustine, which agrees with his own words. Du Pin also says that he wrote a smaller work before that which he published, which is quite lengthy. It is mostly occupied in defence of Cyprian’s rebaptizing policy, and against the use of it by the Donatists. **To refute the objections of the Donatists was the professed object of this treatise, in which is contained Augustine’s defence of infant baptism.** That the above mode of argument was common with Augustine in his controversy with the Donatists, so far as baptism was concerned, is apparent from the following remarks of a learned and well-informed Catholic writer. When, says Friar Baldwin, Augustine disputed with the Donatists on baptism, he did not allege so much of scripture as of apostolical tradition, church usage, custom, testimony and authority. Again, says the Friar, Augustine knew that Optatus was willing to define the question of one baptism against the Donatists, from the naked, sacred scriptures; but, unhappily, he did not acknowledge that rule. After all that was said by Augustine of the universality of infant baptism in the Catholic church, it is a fact worthy of particular notice that he himself was not baptized in infancy, nor till he was more than thirty years old, although his mother was a zealous member of that church, of which he was a catechumen from early life. Similar cases somewhat frequently occur in ancient church history. It has already been stated that Optatus placed faith before baptism. But, says Du Pin, this was said of adult persons only. In this case Du Pin evidently uttered a paraphrase according to his own creed as a pedobaptist, not with his usual caution as to historical facts; but bishop Albaspin, also a decided Catholic, in commenting on this passage of Optatus says: The person baptized should have faith and should believe, which, he says, was not required of him who administered baptism. In the last sentence is the Catholic doctrine, both then and now, against which the Donatists contended most earnestly with Augustine.

Remarks on the Quotations from Augustine on Infant Baptism, Against the Donatists

The above defence of the baptism of infants by this ancient author, as a professedly apostolical institution, has gone the rounds of the baptismal controversy, but who ever read, except in the Latin original, his peculiar description of the baptism of infants, in his time, by trine immersion, and his labored arguments in support of the baptism of little ones; and furthermore, who ever supposed that the defence itself, and the arguments connected with it, were all originally addressed directly to the Donatists, in reply to the inquiry for a divine authority for infant baptism; thereby implicating them as thorough going anti-pedobaptists? Such, however, is most evidently an historical fact, and of course the baptistical character of this people is a logical and inevitable conclusion. The treatise in which the above details are found was professedly against the Donatists. What was said of the books published by Augustine on the baptism of little ones in his dispute on baptism against the Donatists, is found in the preface

to the ninth volume of his works, where it was, of course, inserted by the editor. These books are said to be lost. But the question naturally arises, why did Augustine publish books concerning the baptism of little ones, and why all the concern indicated in the above described efforts of this zealous advocate of infant baptism to set the Donatists right on the subject; did he not know them to be opposed to the infant system? This is said of the main body of the Donatists. That the baptism of infants was practiced in one or more of the other parties, is inferred from the fact that in a few cases we read of men being ordained to the clerical office by the Catholics who were baptized in infancy among the Donatists. Only two such cases, however, can I find in all Augustine's writings on the affairs of the Donatists. The widespread people who bore the general name of Donatists, according to Augustine, in his time operated in four divisions. In the main division, which he calls cardinals, that is, the chief or principal, there were said to be four hundred bishops; in the second, one hundred bishops; in the third, only twelve; in the fourth, the number is not named, but it was probably still less. The two last named divisions did not go out from the original company, but arose from subdivisions. Of the three smaller divisions we have but very little information.

The **Maximianists**, so called from Maximianus, their founder, was the largest of these divisions. Although they are often mentioned by Augustine in his writings against the Donatists, by which name they were distinguished, yet of them he has given no facts of sufficient importance for these narratives. It is not to the subdivisions, but to the main body of the Donatists, that we are to look for the denominational character of this people, and of them the following facts are very conspicuous in their whole history: To them all the writings of Optatus and Augustine on the affairs of the Donatists were directed.

By them were published all the able writings of the Donatists in the defense of their cause and against their opponents.

Against them all edicts were issued, and by them all persecutions inflicted on the Donatists were endured.

They, to the neglect of all the other parties, were summoned to the conference at Carthage. To them was imputed the union with the Circumcellions. To them Augustine addressed his defense of infant baptism.

Church Government of the Donatists

As I have no other information on this subject, with the following paragraphs from writers, who doubtless entertained different opinions of this ancient community, I begin this article. Long, a clergyman of the Church of England, in his small Donatist History, described their church government in the following terms: "The Donatists rejected the Catholic liturgy and set up for themselves in a more **congregational way.**"

Robinson, an English Baptist, thus described the church policy of this people: "The Catholics were for a national church for the sake of splendor. **The Donatists were for a congregational church for the sake of purity of faith and manners.**"

Remarks on the Above Statements

Long was a severe opponent of the Donatists as dissenters from the national hierarchy, and what he says of their rejecting the Catholic liturgy, and of their setting up for themselves in a more congregational way, was doubtless intended as a censure; while we may conclude that a similar imputation by Robinson, himself a dissenter, was intended as an approval, although, of course, he would not approve the orthodox creed of the Donatists [Robinson had some Unitarian sympathies at the latter end of his life]; nevertheless, he did them ample justice in saying they were for a congregational church for the sake of purity of faith and manners, since these were among the primordial principles for which they contended with the Catholics. If we admit the correctness of the above statements of Long and Robinson, of the arguments of the Donatists in favor of a congregational, or an independent church polity, we at the same time concede their form of church government; and their statements, I am confident, will be corroborated by a general survey of the Donatist church order and management; of their cherished principles of freedom and equality; of **their strict adherence to apostolical rules and customs**; and of **their decided and outspoken opposition to all ecclesiastical control** or domination. In all their operations as a religious community I have discovered nothing peculiar to episcopacy, or the episcopal regimen, except the diocese, which in early times was deficient in what in later times became essential to diocesan episcopacy, namely, three preaching orders, a plurality of churches, and the power and control of their other orders by the bishop. What was said by Mosheim and archbishop Whately of the station and duties of bishops, of the independence of churches, and of the identity of a church and a dioceses, in the earlier ages, I think will well apply to the Donatists, from all I can learn of the services and stations of their bishops, and of the order and management of their churches. **“A bishop,” says Mosheim, “during the first and the second century, was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly. In this assembly he acted not so much with the authority of a master, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful servant.** The churches in these early times were entirely independent; none of them were subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one was governed by its own rulers and its own laws.”

“A church and a diocese,” says archbishop Whately, “seem to have been, for a considerable time, coextensive and identical; and each church or diocese, and consequently each superintendent, though connected with the rest by the times of faith and hope and charity, seems to have been perfectly independent, as far as regards any power and control.”

The address of Petilian to his fellow elders and deacons contains something of the episcopal dialect, not enough, however, to make him of that order, in its later and present form. This address, in our language, reads thus: Petilian, bishop: “To the most beloved brethren, fellow-elders and deacons, constituted servants with me (nobiscum) in the holy gospel, through the diocese: Grace be with you, and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

If the term diocese could have had the same meaning in the times of the Donatists as it subsequently acquired, and is now attached to it, the use made of it in Petilian’s address might be of some avail on the episcopal side, but unquestionably **the term diocese was then used interchangeably with that of church**, to designate episcopal jurisdictions, according to the foregoing statement or archbishop Whately. Many examples occur in the records of the conference of Carthage where the terms church, people and diocese are found in juxtaposition, of similar import. Again, Petilian’s deacons were not of the preaching order, but

were executive officers, the appropriate station and service of the deaconship from its origin. Furthermore, I do not find any evidence that Petilian had more than one church organization in his diocese, elsewhere called a church. Petilian, in the conference, when referring to Fortunatus, one of his rival bishops in his diocese, said of him: "He is a persecutor of the Church, in the same city where I am a bishop." One church for a bishop appears to have been the common custom of the Donatists.

Complaints of Petilian of the Manner of Forming New Dioceses by the Catholics

The reader not familiar with ecclesiastical distinctions should bear in mind that bishopric means the jurisdiction of a bishop, and that the term diocese is of the same meaning. The parties were, in the midst of their debates in the conference of Carthage, full of their complaints of each other. Petilian complained to the president that among his people, in the midst of his diocese, in the city of Constantina, his adversaries, at different times, had ordained two bishops, and formed two dioceses of their own; but as the second was among the same people of the first, your excellence, said he to the president, plainly perceives it is an imaginary concern. Petilian again complained of the Catholics for forming three of their own dioceses among the people of the bishop of Mileva, who was present. A third time the resolute complainer referred to a still more extensive invasion of the Catholics on the Donatists. "Among one people," said he, "in the single diocese of his colleague, who was present, they had ordained four bishops against him; and thus it now stands, four Catholic bishops to one Donatist." Of course there were five dioceses on the ground where there was but one before.

Complaints of the Donatists by the Catholics

Let it be recorded, said Alypius, a Catholic, that the Donatists have ordained bishops in all the villages and country towns, and not in any cities. So you, said Petilian, have many bishops dispersed through all the fields; yes, said he, you verily have bishops frequently where you have no people. His meaning, says Bingham, was, that the people had all turned Donatists.

In all the above named transactions Petilian accused his adversaries of seeking to augment the number of their bishops for the conference; and this, it is presumed, was done under a mistaken apprehension that the majority would gain the victory, whereas it had nothing to do with the case, or, in the judgment of the president, against the Donatists.

That the dioceses formed as above describe passed for valid organizations then, may be inferred from the fact that the bishops attached to them were evidently admitted as members of the conference. Many of the bishops in the council of Trent were similar to those in the conference at Carthage; in some cases they were mere boys. According to Bingham, the policy of the Catholics in forming so many small dioceses was to outdo the Donatists.

In these times the Catholics themselves could not have a diocese of three orders of preachers in Africa according to the following account: "Till the time of Augustine," says Bingham, "preaching was the appropriate business of the bishops in the African churches, and Augustine himself was complained of for beginning to preach while only a presbyter, and before he was ordained a bishop." And none but bishops could administer baptism and the Lord's Supper without an episcopal

license. Thus the presbyter, instead of being of the preaching order, could not preach at all without special permission from the bishop. And although Valerius, then the bishop of the Catholic church of Tagasta, in Numidia, Augustine's native place, had authorized him to begin to preach before he received his episcopal ordination, yet, says Bingham, "many bishops were highly offended at it, and spake against it."

The scenes and events above described relate to transactions almost one hundred years after the rise of the Donatists, and a little before we begin to read anything about the diocese in the history of this people, respecting whose presbyters or elders I find but little information as to their stations and duties. I am, however, inclined to think they were of the preaching order, as they were in primitive times.

A Brief History of the Diocese

As this system has often been referred to in the foregoing remarks, and as the denominational character of the Donatists may in some measure be inferred from the nature of the institution in their time, I have judged it proper at this point to speak of its origin, and its changes in the hands of statesmen and theologians. Although for most of the age of Christianity the diocese has been an ecclesiastical institution, yet **in its origin it was altogether secular, and had no respect to church divisions**; it was applied to domestic relations and management, and to the province, and provincial affairs. The term diocese was derived from the Greek noun which signifies direction, government, civil administration, etc., and from the Greek verb, which strictly means, to manage all the house, to direct, govern, etc. Before the Christian era the term in question was applied to one of the lesser provinces of the Roman empire; elsewhere, it was employed to designate a district, or a part of a province. Under the emperors, several provinces under one governor were called a diocese. About the time of Constantine the whole Roman empire, then consisting of about one hundred and twenty provinces, was divided into thirteen civil dioceses. **About this time they began in the west to use the term diocese in the ecclesiastical sense. In the east, the term was thus employed at a much earlier date, according to Mosheim.** Respecting the changes and the magnitude of the metropolitan churches, which were sometimes called provinces, it is sufficient to say that they all began with one single church. This was the beginning of all the great metropolitan establishments in the cities of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and of Rome itself, and elsewhere.

The rise of the Donatists was about the time when the term diocese began to be applied to church divisions in the west, in which Africa was included, the principal country of the Donatists. As this people were distinguished for following the examples of primitive times, we may well suppose that from their origin their ecclesiastical regimen was of the character described by Mosheim and archbishop Whately, namely, that their bishops, instead of having a number of churches under their care and control, had each the care of one Christian assembly or church, which was governed by its own rules and its own laws. Such was evidently the congregational or independent character of the churches of the Donatists, as it is of those of the Baptists. Neither of these communities, whose relationship seems quite intimate, were of the episcopal order, only as of old their pastors were called bishops. **Thus it appears that the main body of the Donatists agreed with the Baptists in their form of church government as they did in opposing infant baptism, thereby confirming the claim of the Baptists of denominational kindred.**

NOTES

1. Church History, vol., I, pp. 311–312. Boston Ed.
2. Quin etiam fiendo et vagiendo cum in eis mysterium celebratur, ipsis mysticus vocibus obstrepunt. Op. Aug., Tome 9, p. 140.
3. Du Pin's Ecclesiastical History, Century 4, p. 289.
4. Et si quisquam in hoc re auctoritatem divinam quaerat, quamquam quod universa tenent ecclesia, nee conciliis institutem, sed semper retentum est, non nisi auctoritate apostolica traditum rectissime creditur. Op. Aug., Tome 9, p. 140.
5. De Baptismo contra Donitistas. Op. Aug., as above.
6. "The History of the Donatists," by Thomas Long, B.D., London, 1677, p. 55.
7. Robinson's Researches, Chap. 8, p. 125 sq.
8. Mosheim's Eccl. Hist., Vol. I, pp. 91–92.
9. Whatley's Kingdom of Christ, p. 172.
10. Petilianus episcopus delectissimis fratribus, compresbyteris et diaconibus ministris per diaccesim, nobis cum in sancto Evangelio Constitutis: Gratia vobis et pax a Deo Patri Nostro et Domino Jesu Christo. Op. Aug., Contra litteras Petiliani, Tome 9, p. 217.
11. Ipse est Ecclesiae persecutor, in eadem civitate ubi ego Episcopus sum. Col. Cartha. Cum Donatistis, in Optatus, p. 50.
12. Bingham's Antiq., vol. I, p. 51.
13. Bingham's Antiq., Vol. I, p. 76

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 12

The Donatists Were Accused of a Confederacy with the Circumcellions

This being one of the foulest charges against this people, I determined, if possible, to ascertain its truth or falsehood; and having resolved on the thorough investigation I have made, I judged it best to give all the facts I could collect pertaining to the subject, under one head.

Formerly, in my few remarks on this ancient people, I, with others, had ascribed to them evangelical traits of character with all their reputed faults, in which, from the silence of history, I was led to infer they were in some way implicated. Such were

my early and long continued views of the character and position of the Donatists, whose want of consistency I tried to overlook, as they were accounted sound in the faith. But as time went on, I was more and more embarrassed with the acknowledged union in history of sound Christians with the worst of men; and the utter incompatibility of this union induced me to undertake this laborious investigation. For the purpose of a full view of Augustine's accounts of the race of men by him called Circumcellions, and his authority for representing them as the soldiery of the Donatists, as Mosheim has it, by the aid of the copious indexes to the works of this voluminous author, I examined them all so far as the Donatists were concerned in any way, especially in their reputed confederacy with the Circumcellions. As the result of my examinations, I will give a few specimens of the descriptions, and then give the disclaimers of the accused party.

The Bad Character of the Circumcellions

"Furious flocks of drunken youth, armed first with clubs, and next with swords, under the well-known name of Circumcellions daily wander through all Africa, committing savage deeds, in violation of all laws of order, and of the authority of the magistrates. I will not speak of the fury of the Circumcellions, and of their fatal precipitations; nor of their sacrilegious and profane worship; neither of their bacchanalian inebrieties. At the sepulchers of the Circumcellions, droves of males and females, in iniquitous mixture, by day and by night, bury themselves in wine, and hence go forth to iniquitous deeds."

The Reputed Confederacy of the Donatists with the Circumcellions

"What," said Augustine to Petilian, "does the sobriety of Donatus profit you, since you are contaminated with the drunkenness of the bad Circumcellions? We justly rebuke the inordinate, the licentious and haughty extravagances of your Circumcellions. Your savage and most violent audacity," continued this false accuser, "with your Circumcellions, the satellites of your clergy, is known to all men; and," said he to the grammarian Cresconius, "it was for the suppression of this audacity that imperial laws have been issued against you, and," said he, "if you complain of persecution from our side, I will demonstrate that we, from your side, suffer much more. Do you not have your portion with adulterers, who suffer drunken flocks of your own sanctimonious people to wander, day and night, with drunken flocks, in shameful mixture, with the Circumcellions? We," continued this accuser, "daily suffer acts worse than those of thieves and robbers from your clergy and your Circumcellions." What author has ever questioned the correctness of any of the above impeachments, that have so often been republished?

The Disclaimers of the Donatists

"When," said Augustine, "the savage deeds of the Circumcellions are presented to the Donatists, they feign their ignorance of such a race of men, or, in opposition to all men, they most impudently affirm they are not at all concerned in their savage deeds." Augustine, in his first remarks on the disclaimers of the Donatists, in which he accused them of speaking in a most impotent manner, appears to have had respect to the whole people. In the next place, he said the bishops of the Donatists in Africa itself, assuredly either said that they were ignorant of the acts of the Circumcellions, or that they themselves had no concern in their acts. These statements were evidently intended to operate against the Donatists with his own people, but how decidedly do they operate for them with their friends?

In this case it seems there was a question of veracity between the parties; but as the subject will soon be presented in a different form, we will leave them at present in their adverse positions. But whether the disclaimers in question were true or false, we have the authority of Augustine himself that they were really made, which discloses an important fact in favor of a long calumniated people, who hitherto have appeared in history as having silently assented to the truth of the foul charges of a most infamous confederacy with the abominable Circumcellions; or, at least, as having made no protest against the charge.

Strange as it may appear, neither by Mosheim nor Milner, nor any other writer who has made some lame apologies for this reputed confederacy, do we find any mention of the important fact that the whole body of the Donatists, both their bishops and laity, disclaimed any knowledge of such a race of men as the Circumcellions, or of any concern with them. The only way to deprive the memory of this people of the benefit of these disclaimers is that of Augustine, who declared they were most impudently made. This their opponents will readily do. But nowhere, except in the original Latin, have I seen any mention of them, in any manner. Besides the foregoing disclaimers of this much-abused people of any knowledge of or concern with the Circumcellions, we find by Augustine's statements that they had free and frequent disputes about their denominational concerns, and from what follows it is evident that Augustine expected the Donatists would repel his impeachments. In proof of this I will give the following examples. Augustine had associated Petilian with the use of the savage clubs of the Circumcellions; instead of waiting for his reply, You, said he, will say, what is that to us? and what concern have we with these bad men?² Questions of this kind, on the part of the Donatists, were quite frequent while repelling the charges of their adversary; and a serious charge on their part was, that he impeached all whom he chose, and would not hear them in their turn, in their own defense.

Accusations on Both Sides of not Proving their Charges Against Each Other

You, said the Donatists, do not prove your charges against us relative to the Circumcellions. Neither, said Augustine, do you prove your charges against the church.

A Great Change in the Whole Business

In the midst of the most severe charges against the Donatists, of their complaints of unfair treatment respecting the Circumcellions, Augustine, by a sudden change of speech, addressed Petilian in the following terms: Let us, said he, come to this agreement, if you please: That you shall not throw against us the bad men whom you think belong to us, neither will I throw at you the bad men supposed to be with you. And so you will see by this agreement, so just, placid and firm, you will have nothing to object to the seed of Abraham in all nations. But why have you impiously thus separated from the seed of Abraham? This you certainly cannot defend.

An Agreement Quite Similar Was Proposed with Maximinus

Let us, said Augustine, throw from our midst the insane objections and reproaches which, by unskillful parties, according to their custom, by turns, are thrown against each other. You shall not throw at us Macarian times, nor I against you the savageness of the Circumcellions. If the one does not pertain to you, neither does the other to me; that is, if the savageness of the Circumcellions does

not belong to you, neither do the Macarian times belong to me. The Lord's threshing floor is not as yet cleansed of chaff. Let us pray and labor as much as we are able that we may be wheat instead of chaff. But, said he, I cannot remain silent respecting your rebaptizing that deacon of ours, since I well know how pernicious to me my silence on that subject might be. In this last sentence Augustine doubtless had reference to the great complaint by his own people of the Donatists for their rebaptizing one of their deacons.

The name of Augustine's bad men was of a singular origin, as was their character described by him at different times. His treatment of the Donatists with respect to these men was also very changeable, as it varied from the foulest charges to offers of fraternal intercourse. But his most censurable treatment was in making false charges, according to his own confession. This name was formed of the three Latin words, "circum", around, "cellas", cellars or huts, and "iens", going. As the men thus named were originally lazy beggars who went around the huts of the peasants for their daily food, they thus acquired their name, which was doubtless formed and applied to them by Augustine himself. According to his account they were peculiar to Africa; and it may be said the name is peculiar to his writings. What a different character did he afterwards give them? The concessions of Augustine to Donatist bishops, by their tenor and implication were sufficient to neutralize all his charges of the confederacy of the Donatists with the Circumcellions in all sorts of crimes. But the following concession is still more to the point: You, said Augustine, complain loudly of Macarius and Macarian times; and we do the same of the Circumcellions.⁵ That the design in this announcement was an offset in reproaches, on the principle of retaliation, is sufficiently plain on the face of the terms, but Augustine elsewhere said, that while the Donatists reproached his people with Macarian times, he would reproach them with the wicked and savage deeds of the Circumcellions.

As Augustine has never given his readers any detailed accounts of the bad men, a late historian has described them in the following terms: "They were lawless ruffians, the refuse of Africa, of no sect and probably of no faith." Such is the description of the Circumcellions by Waddington in his Church History, a clergyman of the English church, who was well acquainted with all ancient church history, and who does not appear to have been partial to the Donatists, as a dissenting community. As a member of an established church, if he was under any bias, it would naturally be against dissenters, as men of national churches generally are. The bad men in question, instead of being an organized company of any creed, were doubtless like their rough kindred of other countries, although they might have been preeminent in lawless acts, since, according to Beausobre, the morals of Africa were terrible in the time of Augustine. It is a fact worthy of notice that in all Augustine's descriptions of the foul deeds ascribed to the Circumcellions, whether by themselves or in the reputed company of the Donatists, that he has never mentioned one name, nor the time, nor place, nor any of the circumstances connected with their lawless transactions.

Closing Remarks

It is not a little singular that, with the exceptions of a moderate amount of the facts of this history of the Donatists, they have been selected from the works of their decided opponents, Optatus and Augustine. In ordinary uses the defenders of accused parties are found among their friends. This anomalous event occurred from the different standpoints of the parties, not so much in their doctrinal creeds as in church building, management, and other matters. What the Donatists

deemed scriptural and true, their opponents denounced as heretical and false; and their arguments against them disclosed their evangelical principles.

Strange diversities appear in Augustine's dealing with the Donatists. One would think by most of his writings about them, they were the worst of men, but when he met them fact to face, there was an entire change in his language towards them. Then he said to them, "Be brothers in the Lord's inheritance." He fought them as criminals, and sought them as innocent. He followed them with the sword, was still was clamorous for their communion. This was the language of this people to their adversary. Similar discrepancies are found in many of Augustine's descriptions of the character and the doings of the Donatists. These descriptions are scattered over hundreds of folio pages of the original, of which it is presumed but few, even of historians, have ever carefully examined; but instead of that, one has followed another in endless succession in presenting the worst features of this old story.

I began this article with Augustine's well known impeachment of the Donatists of a criminal connection with the Circumcellions. In the foregoing protracted survey of the facts pertaining to this case, I have traced the remarks of this accuser in their various forms, also his pacific proposals to the Donatist bishops, and also, with no little surprise, I have read his announcement that he associated his opponents with the men of a bad name as an offset for what they said of his own people. From this concession, and others of a kindred character which have been repeated, it is presumed that all candid and impartial readers will agree with the writer, that Augustine himself made void his own impeachment of the Donatists, and that they are justly entitled to an acquittal from the charge of their imputed confederacy with the Circumcellions, respecting whom, according to Augustine's own record, they disclaimed any knowledge of, or concern with, such a race of men.

NOTES

1. Quorum scelera cum ad eos deferuntur, fingunt se ignorare tale homineum genus, etc. Op. Aug., Tome 9, p. 22.
2. Dicturus es, quid ad nos pertinet? Op. Aug., Tome 9, p. 260.
3. Paciscamur ergo, si placet, ut nec tu nobis malos objicias quos putas nostros, nec vobis ego vestros. Ita videbis hoc pacto tam justo placito atque firmato, nihil te habere quod objicias semini Abrahae in omnibus gentibus. Op. Aug., Tome 9, p. 239.
4. Tollamus de medio inania objecta, quae a partibus imperitis jactari contra invicem solent, nec to objicias tempora Macariana, nec ego saevitiam Circumcellionum. Si hoc ad te non pertinet, nec illud ad me. Op. Aug., Tome 2, p. 33.
5. Clamatis vos de Macario, et nos de Circumcellione. S. Augustini Episcopi Psalmus contra partem Donati, p. 5.
6. Waddington's Church History, p. 168. (Library of Useful Knowledge.)

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 13

Conclusive Evidence Against the Demoralizing Influence of the Conference of Carthage On the Affairs of the Donatists

The report of the editors of Augustine's works on this subject has previously been referred to, namely, that although this people were conquered by force, yet they were not silenced and subdued, for they immediately appealed to the emperor against the decision of the judge. That they did not submit to the judgment in question will fully appear in what will hereafter be exhibited in their subsequent transactions. Further evidence that this people were not generally converted to the Catholics by Augustine's conference, according to his frequent representations, and that the judgment which was pronounced against them did not restrain their speech and actions, according to his descriptions, will be clearly shown.

Friar Baldwin on the Conference

This eminent Catholic jurist, whose name so often appears in this history, lived more than one thousand years after Augustine, whom, as a Catholic, he highly esteemed; yet, in justice to the Donatists in this case, as in a number of others, he gave an opinion decidedly against him, in the following terms: What, said the Friar, may have been the effect of this conference in other respects, he would say of the Donatists what Jerome said of the Luciferians, a kindred party, although they could certainly be overcome and put down by the Catholics, yet by them they could not be persuaded nor convinced. We were conquered by imperial power, not by the truth, was the language of the Donatists. The Luciferians consisted of a small party of orthodox dissenters in the fourth century.

Great Changes in the Affairs of the Donatists, Also in Those of Their Opponents

In the first place, this long afflicted people were in some measure relieved by the sudden and unexpected deaths of a number of high state officials, in the ranks of their adversaries. The Catholics at this time were in great trouble in their state concerns by the invasion of the Goths, by whom Rome was captured in 410, a few months before the conference. The Gothic armies were spreading over all parts of Italy, and threatened all the provinces of the Roman empire, while the Vandals threatened Africa, which they soon after conquered. In this condition the emperor Honorius was in the greatest perturbation, and even desperation, for the fate of the empire, says Friar Baldwin, especially after the death of his prime minister and chief adviser, Stilicho, the circumstances of whose death will soon be related. Truly it would seem that this persecuting ruler had full employment with national concerns without lending his aid in persecuting measures.

Death of Distinguished Persecutors of the Donatists

In addition to the alarming state of the empire, about the time of the conference new and unusual scenes occurred among the Catholics, in which a number of their prominent men were taken from their accustomed scenes of action, one after another, mostly by ignoble deaths, under the charge of treason against the state. The scenes about to be described belong to civil history, but since all the men in

the following list had more or less share in persecuting the Donatists, under edicts from the emperor Honorius, with the approval of Augustine, I will give their names with a few facts of their history. The death of these men occurred in the following order: Stilicho, Heraclion, Apringius, Marcellinus and Boniface. All these men died either a little before or not long after the conference at Carthage. The four first named were beheaded by the order of the emperor, under the charge of treason. Boniface was killed in a duel. Such was the fate of men who had been employed to persecute the Donatists for the reputed crime of treason and rebellion against the Catholic church; and the same ruler who commissioned them to defend said church, ordered the loss of their heads for treason against his crown or the state. Stilicho was of Vandal pedigree, but he was one of the greatest generals of his time, under both Theodosius the Great, and Honorius his son; and under the impeachment, whether true or false, of his aspiring for the throne, the emperor commanded him to be beheaded. The charge against Heraclion was for his descent on Rome with a numerous fleet. The charge against Marcellinus and his brother was a confederacy with Heraclion, who was the betrayer of Stilicho. What a company of high-toned traitors, not only of the state, but also of each other; and who can blame the persecuted Donatists for rejoicing in their downfall? As the last named traitor acted a conspicuous part against the Donatists, it seems suitable that we should give a few of the facts concerning him, during the scenes under review. We have seen in the history of the conference over which he presided, decided indications of haste in his giving judgment on the spot, and closing it in the night; and is it unreasonable to attribute all this to his concern in the great naval expedition just named, which was prepared in the ports of Africa? Marcellinus, says Fleury, in his church history, remained a long time in Carthage after the conference, when at length he and his brother were thrown into prison on a charge of treason in confederacy with Heraclion; and after being a long time in prison, they were both led out and beheaded. What a change of destiny; and what different sensations must have been produced among the people when the rumor spread far and wide, before all Carthage, that he who but yesterday sat on his judicial seat as a cruel judge, lay lifeless beside the block of the stern executioner!

Did His Judgment Die With Him?

This question was agitated immediately after his death, and so much was the emperor concerned on the subject, that, according to Friar Baldwin, within about two months he reaffirmed said judgment with his own edict. The edicts of Honorius were very easily obtained, and were frequently issued. The main question in this case is,

“Did the Edict Help the Catholics to Convert the Donatists, or Hinder them From Opposing Both the Judgment and Its Author?”

This proscribed people, instead of hastening to the bosom of the Catholic church after the conference, according to the representation of Augustine, are found in the open field of controversy with their opponents on the side of those who maintained that the judgment of Marcellinus died with its author. That they did not acknowledge its authority is apparent from what was said of them by Catholic writers. “In the conference of Carthage, as above stated, the Donatists were indeed overpowered, yet they were not put down by arguments, for they speedily appealed from the judgment against them, to the emperor.” “After that great convocation.” said these writers, “the Donatists pursued its president, the tribune Marcellinus, with extreme hatred, principally because he urged the execution of

the imperial laws, in Africa, against them.” The disposition ascribed to the Donatists towards their judge, in the foregoing terms, seems at first view unchristian and unduly severe; but let us consider the relative condition of the parties. Marcellinus had no judicial authority. His appointment was merely to preside in the conference, and pass judgment on the merits of the testimonies and arguments of the contending parties; and accordingly the language of his judgment (moneo,) was that of admonition rather than of judicial command. Thus far he was within due bounds, but it was far otherwise when, as a zealous partisan, he urged upon the state authorities the execution of the dormant imperial laws, which were very severe, against all dissenters. The plan of the judge evidently was to have the Donatists punished beyond what he was able to inflict. It was for this principally they followed him with the hatred ascribed to them, according to the Catholic writers above referred to.

The Donatists Were Accused of Causing the Death of Their Judge

The same Catholic writers who imputed such a deadly hatred of Marcellinus to the Donatists, also said, him they so defamed with count Marinus, by malicious arts and blind intrigues, that by his command he was beheaded. This strange and most improbable story, according to Friar Baldwin, was first circulated by a Spanish ecclesiastic of the fourth century. It was doubtless devised to shield Marcellinus from the infamy of dying a traitor. In this story it is said it was uncertain if the judge thus executed was corrupted with gold at Carthage. It is also said that count Marinus, as a state offender, was immediately recalled from his official station in Africa and severely punished. In this fabulous account we see to what an extent the enemies of this people would carry their misrepresentations against them. What an idea, that a people under the ban of the empire, and everywhere despised by the ruling powers, should have such an influence with a state official!

Gibbon’s Account of the Donatists

“After the conference at Carthage,” says this secular author, “Honorius was persuaded to inflict the most rigorous penalties on a faction which had so long abused his patience and clemency! Three hundred bishops, with many thousands of the inferior clergy, were torn from their churches and ecclesiastical possessions, banished to the islands, proscribed by the laws if they presumed to conceal themselves in any of the provinces of Africa. A regular scale of fines was imposed upon them, according to their rank.”

This description is grounded on an edict in which the most rigorous penalties were indeed threatened, but which edict does not appear to have been executed.

Jacob Gothofred’s Comments on This Edict

“Immediately after the conference,” says this author, “the emperor Honorius engaged in earnest to reclaim the Donatists to the Catholic faith, and to put a stop to their heresy, by his severe edict.” The nature and the express design of the document are represented under seven heads, of which fines and exiles are the most prominent. These, said this commentator, on the severe edict of the emperor, assuredly are the seven considerations with which Honorius endeavored to reclaim the Donatists to the Catholic faith, and to break in pieces their pertinacious institution. According to Gothofred, to operate on the fears of those whom he sought to reclaim, was the main object of the rigorous edict in question.

The fear of the loss of money is the first in the list; the next of the most importance, was the fear of their clergy being sent into exile; then came the fears of the loss of their own goods, and the donations of those to their churches, for the Catholics; and finally, fears for their personal and family enjoyments. How little did the emperor understand the character of the Donatists, to suppose that for any or all these considerations he could induce them to give up their dissenting interest, and go over to the Catholics. Almost a score of the edicts of the emperor Honorius concerning the Donatists may be found in Du Pin's Monumenta of this people. Four were issued in quick succession against their rebaptizing, and still they continued the practice without abatement. But the document now under consideration was the result of an extraordinary effort, doubtless under clerical influence, in which the logic of fines was the principal argument; they descended by tens from eighty to five pounds of gold, according to the rank of those on whom they were imposed. Generally, only the clergy were fined, but in this case all Donatists, and even Catholic laity, were included. That was probably intended for such as favored the proscribed party. Ten pounds of gold was the ordinary sum with which the Donatists were threatened for rebaptizing Catholics, and for other inroads upon them. This, with us, would amount to more than two thousand dollars, and the fifty pound fines to considerably over ten thousand. I can find but one case in which this ten pound fine was imposed, namely, on Crispin of Calama, which was soon remitted. This transaction, related in Du Pin's history of the Donatists, will be described in another chapter. It occurred before this edict was issued. From the day of the giving of the law, said the emperor, the fines imposed must be paid into his treasure, unless the offending parties would cease from their sacrilege and return back to the Catholic faith. But I do not find any evidence that any one returned, or that any fines were paid. Neither can I find that any of the Donatists were exiled for non-payment of said fines.

A Contrast Worthy of Notice

The severe edict of the emperor is dated 412. In the same year we find Augustine, after the conference, addressing the Donatists in mild and fraternal language, and endeavoring to persuade them back to the church.

Circumstantial Evidence Against the Exiles in Question

They must have taken place, if at all, in the full tide of Augustine's operations against this people, concerning whom his last writings were in his controversy with Gaudentius in 420, in which neither party refers to the exile punishment, nor is it complained of by the Donatists in the times under consideration. In these times the chief men were the first to be banished. It was so in the contests between the orthodox and the Arians, and also with the dominant party and the dissenters; and of course such men among the Donatists as Petilian, Gaudentius, Emeritus and Adeodatus, who occupied conspicuous stations among their own people, and were the principal men of the seven debaters in the conference at Carthage, instead of now being at their posts, and boldly defending their cause, would have been in exile on some of the desolate islands in the Mediterranean sea.

Remarks on the Foregoing Details

Not to modify the persecuting measures of the Catholics against the Donatists, but to show that the influence of these measures was much overrated, has been

the main object of these remarks; and the writers principally had in view were Augustine, in what he said of the demoralizing influence of the conference of Carthage on the affairs of this community; and Gibbon, for what he said of the wholesale banishment of the Donatist bishops and inferior clergy, under the influence of the edict of the emperor Honorius, soon after the conference. Both Gibbon and Augustine at times had different dialects with respect to the Donatists. Gibbon not being in favor of either the Catholics or the Donatists, so far as religion was concerned, could give them hard hits by turns. Thus while he blamed the emperor for causing the reputed exile of the large number of the Donatist clergy, he could at the same time stigmatize them as a faction who had long abused the patience and clemency of the emperor. This abuse of the emperor, in the view of Gibbon, doubtless consisted in the Donatists not joining the Catholics according to his plan and desire. The two dialects of Augustine may be described in the following terms: When he wished to prove the influence of his measures for suppressing his opponents, he would magnify their effect; but when answering their complaints of such measures he would say, you exaggerate your sufferings for your error. Both Gibbon and Tillemont, in what they say of the exile of the three hundred Donatist bishops and the thousands of their inferior clergy, refer for their authority to the severe edict above described, the literal execution of which they evidently seemed to take for granted. This opinion appears to have been held by other historians; whereas, according to Jacob Gothofred, the commentator on the edict in question, its main design was to operate on the fears of the Donatists.

NOTES

1. Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I, p. 296.
2. This fleet, says Gibbon, when it anchored at the mouth of the Tiber, surpassed those of Xerxes and Alexander.
3. Decline and Fall, Vol. 2.
4. Metus damni pecuniarii metus clerici in exilium missi; bonorum proscriptionis metus. Du Pin's Monu., p. 260.
5. The terms for pounds stand thus: Auri pondo quinquaginta (50), quadraginta (40), triginta (30), viginti (20), decem (10), quinque (5). Gold then was not a circulating medium, but went by weight, twelve ounces to the pound. Such was then the scarcity of money and its higher value, that it is very improbable that any of the very high or many of even the ten pound fines were ever paid.
6. Exaggeras persecutiones, quas vos patri dicitis. Op. Aug., Tome 9, p. 475.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 14

Pope Gregory Against the Donatists

The late appearance of my extracts from the writings of this ancient and famous pontiff concerning the Donatists may be accounted for from the fact that I had no

knowledge of such writings till most unexpectedly I found them in Du Pin's Monuments. The extracts which I am about to make from pope Gregory's writings will be from seven of his epistles addressed to eminent men, to whom he appealed for aid against the inroads of the heretics on the Catholic church. One of these men was the Roman emperor. By the following descriptions the Donatists will be found vigorous and successful about two hundred years later in history than appears in former accounts of them by Augustine. In making extracts from these epistles I shall take them in their order in Du Pin's work, and shall be confined as far as possible to sentences pertaining wholly to Donatist affairs.

To Gennadius, Patrician and Exarchate of Africa

This man the pope complimented as a distinguished warrior, and, said he, just as the Lord has made your excellence conspicuous for victories for the state, in the same manner you ought to be most highly honored for opposing the enemies of the church. It is know, said the pope, that men of an heretical religion rise vehemently against the Catholic faith; the poison of their heresy, however, must be destroyed, to whatever extent it may gain the members of the Christian body. But may your eminence crush their attempts, and press their proud necks under the yoke of rectitude.

To All the Bishops of Numidia

You, said the pope to these bishops, have sought through our secretary, if the customs of former times are still preserved; which customs were ordained from the first by the blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles. From the pope's answers to these bishops the customs in question appear to have referred to the chief officers of the Catholic church, and, strange as it may have been, the inquiring bishops seemed to fear that converts from the Donatists would find their way to these offices.

Gregory's Answer to the Bishops

In constituting primates, and other chief officers, said he, those are excluded who come to the episcopate from the Donatists, who are put forward for the dignity of primates. This advancement in office, said the pope, we by all means prohibit. Pope Gregory's restraining policy with the Donatists in the business of offices will be referred to from Du Pin in the next chapter. The office of primate with the Catholics has previously been described, to wit: He was the head bishop of his province; by him all new bishops must be ordained; he succeeded to the office as the oldest bishop, and his age was counted from the time of his ordination. Such was the aversion of the Donatists to the Catholics that we should not suppose that they would join them for the sake of office; but all parties have had men of this description. Through all this history we have seen the Catholics were very anxious for the Donatists to join them; and as there was no voting for their primates an office seeker might slide into that office without the voice of the pope or people, without pope Gregory's law against it.

To Columbus, Bishop of Numidia

It is know, well beloved brother in Christ, said the pope, that the ancient enemy who subjected the first man to a life of painful labor, by the crafty persuasion of the delights of paradise, hath now inflicted the punishment of mortality on the human race. With the same craft, said the pope, this old enemy would, with

poisonous transfusions, bring the pastors of the Lord's sheep under his own power. But we, said pope Gregory, unworthy as we are, who have by right assumed the government of the apostolical seat, in the place of Peter, the prince of the apostles, are compelled by the very office of the pontificate, to meet the common enemy. In the next place the pope made mention of an extended petition brought to him concerning the Catholic affairs in the province of Numidia. The substance of the story seemed to consist of the imputation of the corruption of a Catholic bishop, by a reward, from the Donatists, by which they obtained an unusual freedom. But besides he petition, said the pope, we have been informed by the insinuation of the bearers of the document, who are present, that the heresy of the Donatists was daily spreading far around, by our omissions; and, said the pope, it so happens that under a venal license granted the Donatists, very many, by them, are baptized anew, after they have received Catholic baptism. What may come of such a grievous transaction, my brother, it behooves us to weigh with the utmost carefulness of our minds. Behold, said the pope, the wolf, which tears in pieces the Lord's flock, not secretly in the night, but openly in the light, and we behold him rioting in the slaughter of the sheep, with no solicitude for it, and with no sharp words of censure do we oppose these ravages of the wolf. What fruits, said he, can we render to the Lord, of the increase of his flock, if we, its pastors, thus quietly behold it devoured by a beast of prey? Let us, therefore, be watchful, said pope Gregory, to his brother Columbus, that with words of divine eloquence we may reclaim the Lord's flock, as the Pastor of pastors has been vigilant about his own flock.

To The Prefect of Africa

Such, said the pope, is the well known law of your excellence, that it should be made to bear with greater force on the most nefarious depravity of the heretics. We have learned, said the pope, that in their parts the audacity of the Donatists hath increased to that degree that by a pestiferous authority they not only eject priests of the Catholic faith from their own churches, but more than that, they do not fear to rebaptize those whom the water of regeneration had previously washed. After expressing his wonder at such impiety, the pope assured the prefect that the souls of those who were lost would be required at his hands, provided he had neglected the means in his hands for their salvation.

To Victor and Columbus, Bishops of Africa

We are informed, said the pope, that the excitements of the Donatists in their parts, have so disturbed the Lord's flock that very many are torn from it by their venomous teeth; and the result has been that in their most depraved rashness, they expel canonical priests from their own churches; and more than that, it is said that they have inflicted a spiritual death on many by their most nefarious depravity, by rebaptizing many, to whom the water of regeneration had previously been administered for their salvation. The few remarks in this case appear to have been the closing of this epistle. In the first place, the pope spoke of injurious reports which had come to him of what was wickedly said of good men of the right faith; but what was still worse, he said, was, that their sons, or others under control of the Donatists, consented to be baptized into their heresy. And if this account be true, said the pope to bishop Columbus, whom he now addressed for the third time, concerning the Donatists, your episcopal fraternity should endeavor, summarily, to amend and reform the practice. And the pope, after commending the sincerity of the faith, and the unremitting solicitude of the bishop, said: The innocent souls which might be saved by their Catholic baptism,

should not perish by the contagion of heretics. Whoever there be, therefore, said the pope, of the persons we have before mentioned, of whatever class of our people, who have suffered themselves to be baptized anew among the Donatists, with every power, and with all vehemence, all should endeavor to restore them to the Catholic faith.

To the Roman Emperor Maurice

Pope Gregory, as we have seen, had addressed two eminent statesmen, to whom he had made serious complaints of the inroads of the Donatists on the Catholic church. We now come to his address to the head, both of the church and the state, on the same subject. Relative to the management of state affairs with the church, the pope complimented the emperor in the following terms: The unwearied zeal, said the pope, which the emperor maintained in governing the Christian republic amidst the concerns of arms and innumerable solitudes, was a great cause of joy to him and all the world. In the next place, the pope commended the emperor for the serenity of his piety and his opposition to the most flagitious depravity of the Donatists, for its justice and for the tenor of his direct commands concerning them, which were most explicitly published. These commands, it appears, were intended to restrain what the pope accounted the most flagitious doings of the Donatists. Thus far the pope's address to the emperor was highly flattering, but soon it was much otherwise. Most venerable bishops, said the pope, from Africa, have said that the imperial commands for restraining the Donatists are disregarded by the principal men without dissimulation. Again, said the pope, these bishops subjoined to their report, that in Africa, amongst the Donatists, the Catholic faith was publicly exposed for sale. This was a very troublesome story to the pope, but as it was told by his most venerable bishops, he devised various plans to hinder its injurious influence, especially on the most pious youth of the church. With this story most of Gregory's epistle to the emperor is occupied. That the public sale in question was a real and legal transaction is evident from the fact that a secular judge was concerned in it. But in what way the Catholic faith was implicated in it, pope Gregory does not even intimate in any portion of his epistle to the emperor Maurice. In some of his remarks he seemed inclined to treat the story as "a misty fabrication;" but his great anxiety to suppress its circulation does not well agree with this theory. The same may be said of the pope's earnest endeavors to shield the emperor from any blame in the public sale of the Catholic faith. The pope closed his epistle to the emperor with the following remarks, relative to the story under consideration: "It is an obscurity of a pestiferous depravity; and its is the venom of a diabolical fraud." This whole story probably originated from the sale of one or more of the Catholic churches to the Donatists. That these churches often fell into the hands of the Donatists, is abundantly evident from the representations of both Augustine and pope Gregory. As a general thing, this was a matter of course on a change of denomination, without any formal sale or ceremony. In this case there might have been outside demands to be settled. After the next chapter I shall give some remarks on the epistles of pope Gregory, with a few biographical sketches of the author.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 15

Du Pin's History of the Donatists

From Du Pin's Monumenta of the Donatists most of the matter of this chapter has been selected. In that work are contained the epistles of pope Gregory, to which it will be seen Du Pin himself sometimes referred. The first twenty pages of the Monumenta are occupied with brief historical sketches of the origin, progress and changes in the affairs of this people. The whole work contains about four hundred pages, and in it their whole history is given in the full manner no where else to be found. There is an English translation in seven quarto volumes of general church history of Du Pin in the library of Brown University, in which but little comparatively is said of the Donatists; but in that work, and in Optatus, and Augustine, I had become somewhat familiar with this history. Now, as I go for passages of new matter, I shall select such as describe events in a more explicit and intelligent form.

The Origin of the Donatists

Donatus, says Du Pin, divided all Africa into two parts, one of which he chose for himself. This laconic sentence comprehends the early operations of the new party. This saying, so descriptive of the Donatist leader, well agrees with that of the famous warrior, "I came, I saw, I conquered." The above statement of Du Pin relative to the rapid spread of the Donatists over all North Africa has been published by many Catholic writers, although not in such strong language. Indeed, as all the writings of the Donatists have been destroyed, all our dependence for information of their doings must be on their adversaries. Augustine and Du Pin give similar descriptions of the parties into which the Donatists were divided, but it was only Du Pin who said the first party went off, on account of baptism. The Donatists, says Du Pin, sent bishops to Rome, Spain and Gaul, and to other lands, to gain proselytes to their sect. In 392, says Du Pin, a Donatist bishop named Crispin was called into the court of justice, having been accused of heresy according to the Theodosian code. In a set speech of three days, Crispin argued his cause from beginning to end before the proconsul, in which he endeavored to repel the charge of heresy against him. But after all the efforts of the resolute bishop he lost his cause, and the fine of ten pounds of gold was imposed upon him. But it was at once remitted by the request of Possidius, his principal accuser, who was a distinguished Catholic. In this case the theory was exemplified which has been previously suggested, that the then heavy fine was threatened against reputed heretics rather to alarm and hinder them, than for ultimate execution. In the next place, Du Pin referred to new commotions, which, he said, were stirred up by the Donatists on the death of their famous and cruel persecutor Stilicho, as if by his death they were free from the persecuting laws he was commissioned to execute. Both Du Pin and Fleury sometimes spoke lightly of the emperor Honorius as a legislator. The former named his issuing two edicts, one for, the other against, the Donatists, as among the versatile laws of princes. Fleury, on the same subject, said, when the emperor issued the first edict he was in great fear from his enemies, and needed the help of the Donatists, but when the fear was over he turned against them. The account of the execution of Marcellinus and the sentiments of the Donatists of his judgment against them are much like those I have given.

Du Pin's Account of a Synod Against the Donatists

So much, said he, did their impudence and audacity increase that the African fathers called a synod to consult on measures for refuting the calumnies of their judge. Allowances must be made for the language of an opponent in the above sentence. In the next place, said Du Pin, the Donatists, not being satisfied with dishonoring the character of Marcellinus, they even sought his life, and by the direction of count Marinus he was beheaded on the 13th of September, 413. This account is not so full as that before given in the writings of Augustine. Thus, said Du Pin, the Donatists found an occasion for casting a useless veto on the judgment against them. I had prepared some remarks on the strangeness of Du Pin's repeating this absurd story without note or comment when the current account of history ascribes the death of the man in question to the command of the emperor. But I concluded to let it stand, as a specimen of Catholic credulity.

Du Pin's References to Pope Gregory's Epistles Concerning the Donatists

From these epistles, says Du Pin, which were addressed to different men against the Donatists, we are informed that this people, in a weak and languishing condition, survived a long time in Africa. Furthermore, we learn from Gregory's representations, that in his time the number of the Donatists was not small. In the next place, pope Gregory complained of the Donatists for rebaptizing a large number of Catholics, and of their adding them to their own sect. To this complaint, pope Gregory added another of a still more serious and injurious character, that the Donatists drove many Catholic bishops of a canonical order from their own churches. Unhappily for this great historian, there is an entire disagreement in the above complaints which he reported of pope Gregory of the aggressions of the Donatists on the Catholics, and of the previous account of their weak and languishing condition.

Du Pin's Description of Pope Gregory's Trouble with the Magistrates of Africa

The substance of this trouble was, that the magistrates in question failed to take out and execute the rescripts which he sent against the Donatists. In the details of Du Pin on this subject he says the pope assured the emperor that for the future he would demand of the African magistrates more strict dealing with the Donatists. Du Pin, in his account of the condition of the Donatists while under the Vandals, for almost one hundred years, is not so favorable to them as that of Mosheim. He admits that the Vandals evidently favored them as dissenters from their own church of an Arian creed, and that they were free from the persecuting edicts of the Roman emperors, yet, in his opinion, they drew out a miserable life under the Arian yoke.

The Conclusion of Du Pin's Brief History of the Donatists

"Thus for three hundred years and more the Donatist schism continued in Africa, in which it arose, in an altogether inauspicious time, under Constantine the Great; nevertheless, neither by ecclesiastical nor by civil judgments could it be extinguished. Under the emperor Constans it was restrained; under Julian it was renewed; and for many years it filled a great part of Africa, until, by writings, by disputations, and by the encroachments of imperial laws, it was reduced to a few, whose unhappy followers to the sixth and the seventh century lay concealed in some corners of Africa." Thus while church historians generally limit the existence of the Donatists in Africa to about one hundred years, Du Pin extends it to three

hundred years and more. This statement carries us to about the time of the Mahometan invasion of the country. The above summary of Du Pin of the rise and progress of the Donatists till they are lost sight of in history, as an organized and operating community, on the whole, is doubtless well founded; but by following the Catholic dialect this great, and generally fair, historian does not fairly represent this people in what he says of their unhappy and obscure condition. It certainly does not correspond with the descriptions of them as given by pope Gregory.

Remarks on the Epistles of Pope Gregory

These epistles were written almost two centuries after the death of Augustine, who was about as much troubled with the inroads of the Donatists on the Catholic church, as was pope Gregory at this later period, and more so personally, as he lived among them, while Gregory was at Rome. The findings of these epistles has enabled me to extend this history of the Donatists far beyond the common accounts of them; and what must be gratifying to those who feel an interest in this people, they appear as active and successful as in their earlier operations. Without the aid of Du Pin's Monumenta and Gregory's epistles I had traced this history about one hundred years. With these helps I go on about two hundred years more. For about the one hundred years under the Vandal government in Africa, according to Mosheim, they enjoyed the sweets of freedom and tranquillity, although, as we have seen in the remarks of Du Pin, they were annoyed with the Arian yoke. The Vandals were indeed rigid Arians and persecuted the orthodox Catholics on account of their Trinitarian faith, yet it seems to be generally admitted that they treated the followers of Donatus with a good degree of toleration, although of the same orthodox and Trinitarian creed. But in the year 534 the Vandals were expelled from Africa by the famous general Belisarius, who was under the emperor Justinian, and the Catholics regained possession of the country which they held till the Mahometan conquest.

From the time of the Catholics re-entering Africa to that of pope Gregory was a period of about sixty years, during which time I cannot gain any information of the affairs of the Donatists, nor of their treatment by the restored rulers. During the threescore years in question, that is, from pope Boniface II to the time of pope Gregory I, surnamed the Great, they had a new pope every few years, and in the contentions of the rival candidates the Donatists were probably permitted to pursue their usual course in augmenting their number, which, according to pope Gregory, was not small in his time. Although this ancient pontiff was a great writer, I have nowhere seen his name mentioned except in Du Pin's Monumenta, and very briefly by Mosheim, in connection with the Donatists. The last named author, in his brief remarks on the condition of the Donatists in the time of pope Gregory the Great, says, "they were pluming their wings anew for the multiplication of their sect;" and his language would indicate that they were then put down. This does not at all agree with what Gregory himself said of their rebaptizing so many of the Lord's flock, and of their scattering and devouring it like wolves and beasts of prey; of their expelling Catholic bishops from their own churches; and of their making inroads upon the dominant state church to that degree that the pope sought the aid of powerful statesmen and of the emperor himself to arrest them in their aggressive course.

Brief History of Pope Gregory

As this pontiff occupies an important position in Donatist history, I will give the following sketches of his character and deeds: Pope Gregory the Great was the first of sixteen popes of that name; he occupied the papal chair fourteen years, and died, as above states, in 604. **It was this Gregory the Great who sent the famous Augustin, or Austen, as he is sometimes called, with forty monks into England to convert the Anglo Saxons in 596, the same year in which one of his epistles against the Donatists is dated.** This Augustin was an entirely different man from the Bishop of Hippo, who lived about two hundred years before him. Waddington does not favor the theory of Mosheim that pope Gregory suppressed the Donatists, but rather that of Du Pin, who traced them under different rulers in to the seventh century. In the opinion of Waddington, the Saracens or Mahometans might have found the Donatists in Africa when they conquered it.

Comments on What Was Said by Pope Gregory of the Donatists Driving Catholic Bishops from Their Own Churches

At first view this seems a very loud and valid complaint, which was also often made by Augustine in his times. Charges of this kind were made against the Protestants by the Catholics in later times. Such charges will always be made when new parties arise in the midst of old communities. But if such were the differences of the positions and conditions of the Catholics and the Donatists, in the time of pope Gregory, who had all the power of the church and the state at his command and under his control, how could the proscribed Donatists drive Catholic bishops from their own churches, in the common sense of the term? Bingham, although an Episcopalian, has explained the operation of which both Augustine and pope Gregory so loudly complained. The loss of the Catholic churches was owing to the people in them all turning Donatists. As the complaints under consideration were common with the two great church managers, whose operations were almost two centuries apart, may we not infer that during this long space of time the aggressive Donatists had often become repossessors of churches then occupied by the Catholics which had formerly been taken from them?

Augustine and Pope Gregory Compared

Of course they were both decided opponents to the Donatists. But we do not discover so much of the sharp, vindictive, persecuting spirit of the elevated pontiff at Rome, as in the ordinary bishop of Hippo. The language of Gregory often inclined to the complaining side, to his opponents. To them, denunciation was the ordinary language of Augustine. Gregory often laid much of the blame for the loss of Catholic members to the neglect of his bishops. Augustine laid it all to the reputed unfair means of the Donatists.

NOTES

1. Ecce lupus domincum gregem, non jam in nocte latenter, sed in aperta luce dilaniat. *** Cernimus a bestia devorari. Du Pin's Monumenta, p. 335.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

CHAPTER 16

Review of the History of the Donatists and the Last Days of Augustine

Besides reviewing the principal events of this history, I propose to examine the common argument of history, on the rise of the community whose beginning, progress, trials, sentiments, and affairs in general the foregoing narratives have briefly described. For a fair discussion of this subject we ought to examine the Catholic policy at the time of the split in their church concerns, compared with that which the Donatists adopted for themselves. In all church history the beginning of this new party under consideration is ascribed to the division at Carthage on the choice of a new bishop, and no other cause has been assigned for the rise of the Donatists as a separate church organization. This may be accounted for from the fact that hitherto no one has studied their history or their principles sufficiently to understand them, or to show that they were actuated by any principles in their new organization aside from those above ascribed to them. But that there was a predisposing cause in the condition of the old body for a separation, on the part of those who desired church purity, and who were tired of the mixture of good and bad members for the sake of church union, is apparent in the early measures of the Donatists, and in all their controversies with their opponents on church discipline. They were all Catholics at first, and if they went off from the old body merely on account of their disagreement about a new bishop, why did they not continue Catholics after their separation, as did the Jansenists and others; and as doubtless the new party will do, which appears to be forming against the dogma of the pope's infallibility? But very different was the course of these ancient reformers, and that they were well prepared for a new organization, with scripture rules of discipline, we may infer from the rapidity of the rise of the churches on these principles over all North Africa.

The views of the church of Christ by the Donatists, and the strictness of their church discipline, may be inferred from the following statements: It was said by the Catholic bishop Albaspin, whose name has often appeared in these narratives, that the Novations and Donatists were called Puritans because they held that the visible church of Jesus Christ does not, and ought not to, consist of any but those who are free from spots and falls, and that all others should be cast out. When the Catholic church was notoriously full of bad members, it was said by Augustine, the Donatist discipline would split it into a thousand schisms. The reformers of North Africa, unlike the reformers of later times, did not leave their work half done. Having repudiated the head of the church which they left, they also disowned its members, its baptisms, its ordinations, and all its official unctions; and all who came to them from the old body, whether bishops, elders, deacons or lay members, were required to be rebaptized, reordained and re-appointed in their new connection, in their different stations. Mosheim asserts that they required re-baptism of all who joined them from other parties. But according to Neander, the requisition was made only of those coming from the Catholics, for the reason that by adhering to Caecilian, the obnoxious bishop, they ceased to have the predicates of a true Christian church.

The Writings of the Donatists

All these writings are lost except the portions which have been preserved by Augustine; and as these portions consist of extracts quoted for the purpose of refuting their sentiments which were in conflict with his own, the said extracts thus providentially preserved are now valuable for information of the real

sentiments of the Donatists. In answer to the natural inquiry as to the genuineness of these extracts, I answer: The Donatists often have the best side in argument, and they combat the positions of their opponent in terms exceedingly severe. Many of the most interesting passages in these extracts, thus preserved, are incorporated in the foregoing narratives. The reader should bear in mind that all these passages were recorded by Augustine himself, of which the following may serve for specimens of their plain and censorious style: "The Catholic church is a human figment. "The Good Father, meaning Augustine, sees no difference in a man of faith and an infidel, as a baptizer. "With us bad men may be unknown, as such. "With them, they are well known, to all. "If we are criminals, why are you so clamorous for our communion? "On the other hand, if we are innocent, why do you follow us with the sword? "Why do you continue your vain and fruitless controversy with us? "God created men free; how am I to be deprived of that by human lordship which God hath freely bestowed on me? "You boast of your church union, which is obtained by war and is stained with blood."

Summary of the Persecutions of the Donatists

These began soon after the commencement of the reign of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, and they continued at intervals by his successors, with more or less severity, for about half a century. Although Constantine was declared emperor in 306, yet his undivided reign did not commence till the death of his rival, Maxentius, in 312. For a few years he suffered the ruling powers of the Catholic church to persecute the dissenters from it; but this was restrained during the last sixteen years of his reign. But under two of his sons, namely, Constantius and Constans, this people were severely persecuted, especially by the last named.

We now come to a great change in the business of persecuting the Donatists by the Constantine family, all of who but one, who were zealous Christians by profession, were more or less concerned in persecuting the Donatists; while this one, namely, Julian, surnamed the Apostate, a nephew of Constantine the Great, became a most distinguished benefactor of this persecuted people. By his imperial decree all who had been banished by his relatives were permitted to return to their country, their churches and their homes. This was in 361. For many years after this event the Donatists do not appear to have suffered severe persecutions.

Review of the History of the Conference at Carthage

This convocation was literally like the handle of a jug, all on one side. It occurred almost one hundred years after the rise of the Donatists, and but a few years after the then young bishop of Hippo appeared in the field against them. As the history of this conference occupied so large a space in the works of both Optatus and Augustine, and as in its magnitude and design it was the greatest effort of the enemies of the Donatists to suppress them, it is somewhat difficult to account for the silence of history respecting it. The main object of the great undertaking most evidently was to gain possession of all the Donatist churches in Africa by legal authority, under forms of law. Chapters V, VI and VII are wholly occupied with the history of this conference; the manner in which it was formed, the debates of the parties, their accusations against each other, and the final judgment of the president, in which the Donatists were condemned. In their debates during the three days of this conference, so many were their references to their controversies at their different homes, that an observer might have formed a tolerably good history of these home controversies all over the country.

While in other great meetings of disagreeing parties, in their subjects of discussion will be some important topics relative to faith or practice, scarcely anything of the kind came up in this meeting, except on church discipline. On this subject bishop Albaspin, a famous Catholic writer, said all turned on the question whether the field, in the parable of the wheat and tares, meant the world or the church, and, said this bishop, the decision of this question was the main business of the conference. The field means the church, said Augustine, with the wheat and the tares together. This was the favorite system of this famous church leader. Should any doubt the correctness of this statement, he may be convinced of its truth by an examination of all Augustine's writings on the subject in his controversies with the Donatists. A few of his arguments against the strict disciplinarian opponents were in the following terms: "It was foretold of the church of the coming Messiah, that it should be composed of good and bad members, to the end of the world. Bad members in the church will not contaminate the good. Good members, secure of their own salvation, ought to tolerate the bad, in the church, for the furtherance of theirs."

The Painful Labors and Great Distances Traveled in Attending the Conference

As the Donatists were spread over all North Africa, from the Atlantic ocean on the west, to the borders of Egypt on the east, a distance of about two thousand miles, although its average width was but about three hundred miles, and as Carthage, the place for the conference, was about midway of the long country, it is plain to be seen that many of the bishops had to travel a thousand miles or more. If Carthage was not central, of course those from one end would have to go farther than from the other. The length of North Africa may be shown by comparing it with a territory of equal length on our Atlantic coast, which would extend from Boston a considerable distance into the southern states. And the whole journey both ways was probably on foot, the common mode of traveling in those times. Some who lived near the southern shores of the Mediterranean might have obtained passages by water, as Mr. Perry has suggested. I had supposed that June, the month of the conference, in a warm latitude, was an unfavorable time for travel. The remarks on this subject by Mr. Perry, late consul at Tunis, who spent a number of years in the country, may be found in a note. [1]

As Augustine was evidently the projector of the great convocation under review, for the express purpose of suppressing the Donatists, I could never comprehend why he took such a roundabout way in the business, which subjected all the bishops of both parties to the laborious journeys which have been described; of which, however, the Catholics did not complain, as by the success of the measure they doubtless expected to gain the churches which the Donatists would lose, and thus demoralize their aggressive rivals. But the question returns, why did not the grasping bishop seize upon the churches he coveted at once, with an armed force, as the Catholic managers were accustomed to do in former times? To this question it may be said it was too late in the day for this rough measure. The people had become numerous over all the country, where they were mixed with the Catholics and others in the ordinary pursuits of life; and so well were they esteemed that the magistrates declined to persecute them. Of this fact we have ample evidence from both Augustine and, at a later time, from pope Gregory. In closing this review of the conference the following questions naturally occur: As during the whole time of the conference nothing was alleged against the Donatists which would subject them to a criminal process, why was this method adopted for their suppression? It was doubtless intended to obtain their condemnation by imperial authority. The whole business of the conference was an empty show;

none of the subjects of the debates were referred to by the judge in his decision adverse to his opponents.

Again, I could not divine why all the Donatist bishops were called to Carthage, where only about twenty of them found anything to do, but to assist the president in forming a list of their names and the location of their churches, until the thought occurred that the list thus formed might have been an essential part of the conference. This idea was confirmed when I called to mind the great care of the president during the long process in making out the list of the Donatist churches and the names of their absent bishops. From the *exparte* character of this conference, and from the Catholic gold said to be in the hands of the president, which saying was never disproved, Augustine doubtless confidently expected the churches of the Donatists would be awarded to his party. In that case the apparently useless list hitherto, would be an ample guide to the agents who would be employed to install Catholic bishops in the four hundred Donatist churches. On this theory the obtaining this list was one of the principal objects of the conference. This is the most probable reason I can give for compelling all the Donatist bishops to meet at Carthage, where so few of them found nothing to do but to help form the list of all their churches and bishops, present or absent. In the whole matter of the getting up and management of this unsuccessful Carthaginian convocation there were far too many undeveloped plans for honest and fair-dealing men.

I will now briefly examine a most serious charge of Augustine against the Donatists, which exceeds that of their reputed confederacy with the Circumcellions, so far as they were personally concerned.

The Imputed Suicides of the Donatists

Century after century the charge of these criminal acts against this people has gone the rounds of church history, while no one, to my knowledge, has ever looked it directly in the face or taken any pains to ascertain the truth or the falsehood of the charge. And as it originated with Augustine, all who have repeated it, have done so on his authority; and as I resolved to sift this old story to the bottom, all the works of this voluminous author in which the Donatists were concerned have been carefully examined in the original Latin. And after all my researches in these works for something explicit and reliable on this subject, or from which an inference can be fairly drawn, I found but five cases of deaths which Augustine imputed to suicide; and one more case in which he accused the person of premeditating the act. Of the five cases of actual deaths, all agreed that they occurred in the Macarian war against the Donatists. These are the only cases now to be examined, only two of which were named. These deaths were all charged upon the Catholics by the Donatists, but were denied by Augustine. "Your voluntary deaths, which you inflict on yourselves and then charge them upon us," was the common language of Augustine to the Donatists. Concerning the other three, said he, whose deaths you have equally charged upon us, I suppose there were those who knew why or in what manner they died; I confess, said he, I have not sought to know.

Such was the conclusion of the discussion between the Catholics and the Donatists on the question of three of the five reputed suicides, and of Augustine's strange assertion that he had not inquired concerning the cause of the manner of their deaths. Donatus and Marculus were the names of the other two. The first was a bishop; the other was either a bishop or an elder. They were both prominent

men with Donatists in Numidia. This Donatus was not the original man of this name, although he has often been confounded with him. Of this martyr I can only learn, in this connection, that he is said to have been thrown into a well. This was charged upon the Catholics, by the Donatists, as it was done in the Macarian war. On the death of Marculus I find accounts of considerable length, by both parties. Augustine said, he had heard he might have precipitated himself. This, he said, was more credible than that it was done by Roman authority, in the Macarian war, as that punishment was not according to the Roman laws.

The Death of Marculus, by a Donatist Author

“By the command of Macarius he was taken on his own possessions, in the Macarian war, where he was at once scourged with cords; in the next place, by a strong guard he was blindfolded and conducted through a number of the cities of Numidia to the New Rock, where, after four days, by a soldier, he was precipitated from the highest point of the rock.”

This was doubtless the true account of the death of Marculus. This account is found in a note in Augustine’s works, where it must have been inserted by editors more careful and candid than the author. The case of Gaudentius is the only one yet to be examined, in which case the charge of his adversary was premeditating a suicidal act; but this distinction is generally so far overlooked that for unnumbered ages this man has stood in history as a distinguished advocate among the Donatists; and no historian that I have seen has appeared to notice that the original charge by Augustine’s own confession was made with other words than those which Gaudentius himself employed. And strange as it may appear, all authors have quoted the identical passage in question against Gaudentius, and have presented his constructed argument to prove him a patron of suicide. The language of this old story, on both sides, with its connections, is briefly given in Chapter IX. Thus ends the whole story of Augustine concerning the reputed suicides of the Donatists.

The Last Days of Augustine

For about forty years this unwearied opponent of the Donatists had sought in various ways to hinder and suppress them. According to Neander, this famous Catholic bishop was the soul of all the bishops of his order in North Africa; and whoever examines his language and measures will evidently discover that he regarded the whole country as the predestinated and lasting inheritance of his party, to the exclusion of all dissenters. But now, near the close of his life, he beheld an army of Vandals making rapid conquests of this country under their ambitious king, Genseric. These Vandals were of German origin. They had a full grown and well-ordered church establishment of the Arian faith. They held to the union of the church and the state. They also held the right and the duty of kings to manage in church concerns, and to punish dissenters. In these respects their ecclesiastical form was much like that of the Catholics. Thus two great hierarchies met on the same round, equally dogmatical and intolerant. Who now, of the Catholic bishops, says Robinson, dare preach a sermon on the text they had so often abused, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; the powers that be are ordained of God.”

Augustine did not live long enough under the Vandal government, says Robinson, to witness the full extent of the sufferings of his own people; but he lived a sufficient time to witness the effect of that wicked doctrine of persecution, which

he had taught the Catholics to practice on those he called heretics, returned with a vengeance on their own heads. Furthermore, says Robinson, he who, through his whole life, had been warring against heretics, now, by a revolution in government, under a zealous Arian head, became a heretic himself. During the progress of the invasion a number of Augustine's associates sought a refuge with him in Hippo. Here, they who had driven the Donatists from their churches, had frequent tidings of a counterpart of these doings, in the expulsion of their own bishops from their seats, and in their imprisonment, and exile, and occasionally capital punishment. This Vandal war was a work of some years. The siege of Hippo lasted fourteen months, in the third of which Augustine sickened and died, at the age of seventy-six, in the year 430. Thus ended the laborious life of the far-famed bishop of Hippo.

In my extended researches for the refutation of Augustine's foul charges against the Donatists, I have learned more of their real character than from all other writers; and in his objections to their church polity and discipline, in which they disagreed with his own, their scriptural and evangelical principles are very clearly disclosed.

NOTES

1. Mr. Perry says: "I do not regard June as an unfavorable time for travel in North Africa, for though the rays of the sun are piercing and the dust trying to the eyes, one will at that season avoid mud and swollen streams which travelers encounter at an earlier period." MS Letter.

2. "Fateor non quaesivi."